

John Ringo

KING OF THE COWBOYS



HIS LIFE AND TIMES FROM THE
HOO DOO WAR TO TOMBSTONE

SECOND EDITION

DAVID JOHNSON

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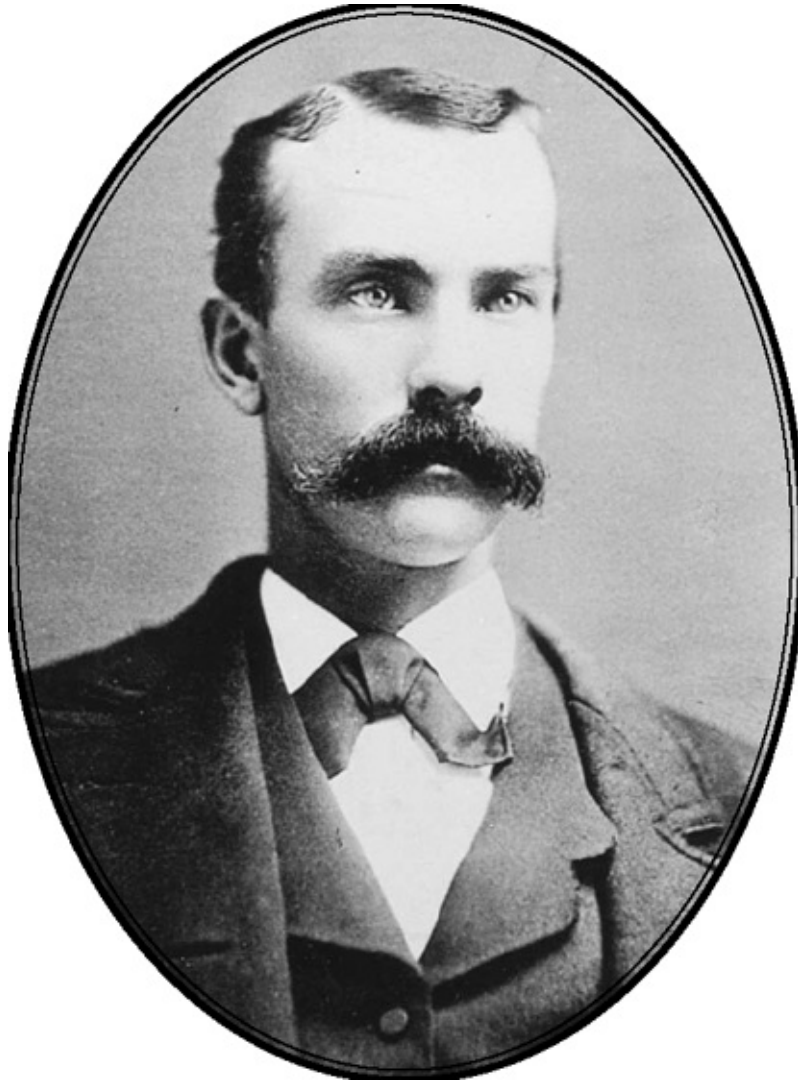


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NUMBER 6 IN THE A. C. GREENE SERIES



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This one is dedicated with love to Ieva and Kris, the two women that have made the last thirty plus years of my life special.

You are the best.

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Foreword

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEEN YEARS after his suicide, the name John Ringo continues to fascinate historians, writers, movie goers and the public at large. The fact that he developed a reputation as a fighting man in Texas before becoming involved in the Tombstone, Arizona Territory conflicts of the early 1880s only added to his reputation. One obituary spoke of him as a well-known individual who needed no introduction. In fact one editor called him the “King of the Cowboys” when that word was synonymous with the words “rustler” or “hardcase.”

Even without such works as Stuart N. Lake’s fictionalized biography of Wyatt Earp, in which the claim is made that Earp cleaned up the wild cow-towns of Kansas, as well as bringing law to Arizona Territory, Ringo would have no doubt become a famous—or notorious—individual of the Old West. Lake’s book, *Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal*, published in 1931, tended to downplay Ringo’s importance in the Tombstone saga, certainly not giving him the attention Walter Noble Burns did in his *Tombstone: An Iliad of the Southwest*, wherein Ringo becomes the Hamlet of the Southwest, quoting Shakespeare and speaking Latin among other languages. These two works brought great attention to Ringo’s name; numerous magazine articles also focused on Ringo as well, mainly during his Tombstone period. Today the writings of Lake and Burns are considered semi-fictional; certainly what either author said of Ringo is to be treated with caution.

Ironically Wyatt Earp, who, according to some writers, killed Ringo but in reality did not, gained immortality in gunfighter literature by creating the myth of his own invincibility. Earp’s initial efforts at getting his life story into print with the help of John Flood, failed miserably. Only through the literary talent of Stuart N. Lake did this man’s name become a household word. Consequently there are perhaps over a score of biographies of various degrees of accuracy available to the Earp buffs.

Ringo was just the opposite, never trying to gain notoriety, at times perhaps covering his “paper trail,” much to the dismay of the serious historian. Had he been followed around by an *amanuensis*, however, his reaction no doubt would have been whatever the 19th century equivalent of “get lost” was. But Ringo’s life needs to be told; his career needs to be researched and recorded accurately. Now, over a dozen decades after his body was discovered, Ringo has achieved the status of a celebrity. Two recent efforts from Hollywood—*Tombstone* and *Wyatt Earp*—have John Ringo as a prominent character, in particular the former.

Prior to these recent films Hollywood gave some attention to Ringo, albeit basically in name only. In 1939 John Ford produced what some have called the “best western ever made”—*Stagecoach*—which catapulted John Wayne to stardom for his portrayal of the Ringo Kid. If not the character, at least the name was taken over by this United Artists production. A little over a decade after *Stagecoach* another top Hollywood star utilized the name: Gregory Peck starred in the role of Jimmy Ringo in the 1950 production *The Gunfighter*. Here there is

little similarity to the real life Ringo's career. Peck portrays an aging gunfighter who wishes to forget his violent past, yet younger would-be gunfighters want to challenge him to take on his reputation. Of course he can not simply forget his past to live normally and must sacrifice his own life.

In 1954 Republic Pictures produced a series of television westerns, *Stories of the Century*, released now in DVD format entitled *Legends of the Old West*—placing their hero, railroad detective Matt Clark, up against most of the big names of the Old West: Doc Holliday, Geronimo, Judge Roy Bean, Quantrill, and of course John Ringo. There is still very little factual about the production, in spite of the claim that the story was “based on official newspaper files and records.” Ringo is described as a “famous and notorious gunfighter and smuggler” although no smuggling is portrayed in the program, unless an oblique reference to cattle rustling can be counted as “smuggling.” Ringo is also described as the “most dangerous killer in Arizona.” In reality he killed no one in Arizona Territory. Ringo has become a fatalist, knowing he will succumb to the dread 19th century disease of tuberculosis. Thus life is meaningless to him, his only apparent desire being to live a life of relative opulence with good liquor, fancy clothes, and occasionally killing someone with his “handkerchief duel” wherein Ringo and the opponent each grab hold of the ends of an oversized handkerchief, draw their pistols and at such close range one or both will be shot to death. Curiously in this production Ringo does die in July of 1882, as did the real Ringo, and close to water, although it is a lake instead of the creek which actually coursed its way close to the tree in which Ringo sat and took his own life. Here Ringo dies of thirst after trying to escape detective Matt Clark's pursuit of him across the deadly *Jornada del Muerto*. No bullet in the head brain here.

Due to the popularity of television's *Bonanza*, star actor-turned-singer Lorne Greene recorded a ballad with Ringo's name which became a popular hit. In it, Ringo is found near death by the ballad singer. Then the two men's paths diverge—the narrator becoming a lawman while Ringo becomes an outlaw. Recovering from his wounds Ringo practices the fast draw and becomes deadly accurate with his six-shooter. The lines are haunting and beautiful: “With lead and blood he gained such fame/All through the West they feared the name . . . of Ringo.”

Thus, with Hollywood productions of little value, television programs with only a trace of accuracy, even a song—and perhaps a ballet and countless periodicals featuring stories dealing in some aspect of Ringo's career—it is not surprising that the authentic life of John Peters Ringo remained largely undocumented. It is not easy to devote years to studying the life of a man who cared little for preserving a paper trail, avoided the law on occasion, chose to live on the outskirts of the law, abused liquor and played with Fate at the gambling tables. What Dave Johnson has done with this revised and expanded biography of one of the Old West's most popular figures is to delve into those hard-to-locate records to determine who the real John Ringo was. In so doing he has without a doubt read miles and miles of microfilm, visited courthouses numerous times where Ringo lived, searched newspapers, court records, documents in a multitude of archives, conducted interviews with descendants of Ringo's contemporaries. Previous Ringo “biographers” obviously could have devoted the time and energy to search out obscure records, but chose not to. Literary creativity is much easier. The passion to learn as much as possible about the life of the man who may indeed have been a Hamlet among outlaws, as well as King of the Cowboys, was not present within those other

writers and historians, as it has been in Dave Johnson. Western buffs as well as students of American history and biography are to be grateful to Johnson for this accomplishment, providing us with a complete biography of the gunfighter from Indiana, John Peters Ringo.

Chuck Parsons
Luling, Texas
September 2006

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“A Hamlet among outlaws”

IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING HIS DEATH, John Ringo has fascinated readers. Ringo’s legend “began to slowly sprout and take root” only four days after his death.¹ The seeds of that legend were sown in Texas’ bitter Hoo Doo War. At the time he was no different from dozens of other men engaged in the conflict, each with his own story. Yet unlike most of them, Ringo was destined to become a legend.

Walter Noble Burns can be credited with almost single-handedly popularizing John Ringo. From his pen emerged a tarnished knight errant who rode out of nowhere and died mysteriously. In 1927 Burns wrote, “John Ringo stalks through the stories of old Tombstone days like a Hamlet among outlaws, an introspective, tragic figure darkly handsome, splendidly brave, a man born for better things, who, having thrown his life recklessly away, drowned his memories in cards and drink and drifted without definite purpose or destination.”² With that single, emotional sentence, Burns set the stage for the romantic myth of John Ringo.

Unfortunately for history, Burns allowed his desire to write a marketable book interfere with historic truth. *Tombstone, An Iliad of the Southwest* mingled folklore with fact to the point that the entire volume is suspect. One writer characterizes the book as “seriously flawed.” “When Walter Noble Burns wrote *Tombstone* in the style of his time, the question followed: Is this history or is it a novel?”³ In creating the mythical John Ringo, Burns also created a target for later historians and writers to either assail or glorify.

Ringo was far more than a creation of Burns, however. In the pre-*Tombstone* gunfighting West he was recognized and respected. John Wesley Hardin, Texas’ number one shootist, made Ringo’s acquaintance in the Travis County jail in Austin. Hardin apparently liked the man. William Preston Longley, a gunman of equal notoriety, also knew Ringo but disliked him. Any number of men tried to enhance their own reputations by boasting that they killed Ringo while he was passed out from a binge lasting several days. Little glory attaches itself to killing a sleeping man, and the historian must ask why so many have made the claim.

Part of the answer lies in Ringo’s Texas years. He fought in the Hoo Doo War and arrived in Arizona with garbled accounts of that feud yapping at his heels. In his abbreviated account of the feud, Burns confused Ringo’s actions with those of fellow feudist John Baird. “While he was little more than a boy, he became involved in a war between sheep and cattle men. His only brother was killed in the feud, and Ringo hunted down the three murderers and killed them.”⁴ Burns doubtless drew that succinct and over-simplified version from one of his informants. It was what people in Arizona believed and, inaccurate as it was, Ringo could not escape his reputation. He was the feudist who destroyed his enemies, the remorseless gunman who killed savagely and emerged unscathed. In contrast, the men who knew Ringo generally

liked him. Grace McCool, who interviewed Ringo's acquaintances, asserted, "All the old timers, who knew him, liked him, and spoke well of him."⁵

For more than a century, John Ringo successfully eluded serious biographers. Never reluctant to let facts interfere with a good story, pulp writers and folklorists either invented or repeated settings and events that, given the dearth of factual evidence available, at times had the ring of truth. There is a copious amount of these fictions beginning in the 1920s and persisting to the present.

Unlike the knight errant portrayed by Burns, John Ringo did not ride out of nowhere. His family may well be one of the best-documented in America. They were Dutch Walloon in origin.⁶ Jerome B. Collins recognized the Dutch origin in 1880 when he referred to John Ringo as Ike Clanton's "Dutch friend."⁷ Ringo's name and lineage, however, have proven troubling to writers.⁸

John Ringo's great-grandfather was Major Ringo, who with his wife Elizabeth Hazelrigg moved to Kentucky in mid-1789, ultimately settling in Montgomery County no later than 1797. He and Elizabeth had eleven children prior to his death in Montgomery County on July 15, 1838. Major Ringo's immediate family maintained close ties for several generations. One of his children, Peter Ringo, born June 29, 1791, was the grandfather of John Ringo.

Peter Ringo married Margaret Henderson on October 6, 1813.⁹ At least two children were born to them in Kentucky: Joel on September 27, 1814, and Elvira on April 5, 1816. The couple's next children, William H. born on November 24, 1817, and Martin Ringo, born on October 1, 1819, were reportedly born in Kentucky. This may be an error. By 1817 Peter Ringo had relocated to Wayne County, Indiana, where on October 7, 1817, John and Sarah Jones sold him a plot of land in Centerville for \$130. Justice of the Peace Isaac Julian recorded it on October 13, 1817.¹⁰ This appears to establish William and Martin's birthplace as Indiana. Martin consistently listed his place of birth as Kentucky in all available records. The 1820 census places the Ringo family in Wayne County. This record notes four white males and two white females in the household and lists Peter's occupation as "manufacturing."¹¹ The following year Albert H. Ringo was born on November 22.

The Ringos were founding members of the Centerville Methodist Episcopal church in 1823.¹² The following year Peter served as county treasurer.¹³ On February 28, 1825, Peter purchased about eighty acres of land from Samuel and Sally Lough.¹⁴ At a sheriff's sale on April 10 of the same year, Peter expanded his holdings.¹⁵ Several more children were born in Wayne County between 1820 and 1830: Hamilton on February 3, 1824; Melissa Jane on January 1, 1826; and Pugh on February 27, 1828.¹⁶

The 1830 Census for Wayne County notes the Peter Ringos but reveals little beyond their ages.¹⁷ During the next decade three more children were added to the family: John on March 19, 1832; Martha Elizabeth on July 9, 1834; and Marshall C. on December 27, 1838. The Census for 1840 lists seven children of varying ages, three of whom were engaged in agriculture.¹⁸ The eldest Ringo children had moved on. Joel Ringo was in Arkansas, engaged in his medical practice and living in close proximity to his uncle, Daniel Ringo, who was serving as the first chief justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court.¹⁹ Joel and Daniel remained

close, and Daniel's will refers to him as his "esteemed nephew" in whom he had "full and implicit confidence."²⁰ Elvira had married John R. Funk on December 6, 1832, and by 1840 had three children of her own.²¹ William Ringo also moved to Arkansas where he was practicing law.²²

Peter Ringo prospered in Indiana. A description of his farm four miles northwest of Centerville noted, "It consists of One Hundred and Sixty Acres of Land, of good quality, and in a good state of repair. The improvements comprise a very good Barn, Dwelling and Outouses, large Orchard, & c. There are a good Spring and Well near the house, and never failing stock water in almost every part of the farm. It is also very well timbered."²³

During the early 1840s Martin also left home. Possibly he went to Arkansas to visit his brothers. If so he did not remain long. Ultimately he went to Missouri where cousins, sons of Samuel H. Ringo, were well established.²⁴ Martin apparently worked for his cousin, also named Samuel Ringo, for a time. Later Martin engaged in the mercantile trade that he undoubtedly learned at the firm of S. & A. H. Ringo. He and his cousins remained close throughout their lives. That business association apparently led to a more pleasurable one. In Liberty, Missouri, Martin met Mary Peters.

It has been stated that Mary and her sister Augusta, who married Coleman Younger, were twins.²⁵ Another writer, aware that Mary had sisters, mentions Augusta by name, adding that she was an older sister. Both together arrive at the truth, as Mary was a twin, but not to Augusta. Her twin was Martha.²⁶ Neither writer discusses the Peters family in depth, but Mary Peters eventually linked John Ringo to the Younger, James, and Dalton families. John's obituary has a garbled allusion to the kinship, calling him a "grandson" of Colonel Coleman Younger.²⁷

Mary's father John R. Peters was born in Woodford County, Kentucky, on February 15, 1797.²⁸ In 1821 Peters married Frances A. Simms, moving to Liberty four years later. When Liberty was incorporated on May 4, 1829, Peters served on the first Board of Trustees.²⁹ With him on the board was Samuel Ringo.³⁰ The Peters family was well thought of in the community. John served for a time as sheriff of Clay County and justice of the peace.³¹

John's wife, Frances Simms, was born August 24, 1796, to Richard and Elizabeth Ashby Simms.³² The couple had seven children: Vienna Strother, born May 22, 1822; Augusta, born September 26, 1823; Mary and Martha, twins, born November 13, 1826; Enfield S., born October 15, 1830; Ashby, born c. 1838; and William, born c. 1840.³³

Ringo's best known family tie came through his aunt Augusta Peters. On July 21, 1842, Augusta married a Presbyterian minister named James M. Inskeep who had been born in Virginia around 1809. The couple had two children, Florence, born around 1846, and a second child who died young.³⁴ Later Augusta wed Coleman Younger, an uncle of the Younger brothers.³⁵ Younger's half-sister, Adeline Lee, was the mother of the Dalton brothers.³⁶

The Ringos were also linked briefly to the James family through Mary's uncle, Benjamin A. Simms. Benjamin, born around 1800 in Virginia, served in the Regiment of Virginia Militia during the War of 1812.³⁷ He married Mary Ann George on December 11, 1823, in Woodford County, Kentucky, before moving to Missouri. After Mary Ann's death, he married Zerelda

Cole James.³⁸ The marriage was short lived. The 1885 *History of Clay and Platte Counties, Missouri*, notes that “the chief trouble arose from the fact that her three little children, Frank, Jesse, and Susie, whom she had always humored and indulged, gave their old step-father no end of annoyance.” Benjamin demanded that the children be sent away, and when Zerelda refused, the couple separated. One tradition notes “that Zerelda left Simms because he was mean to her sons.”³⁹ Simms died January 2, 1854, in Clay County.⁴⁰

In the spring of 1846 Mexico declared war on the United States. Martin Ringo enlisted June 7, 1846, in Company C, First Regiment, Doniphan’s Missouri Mounted Infantry, for a term of one year. He was mustered into service at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, with a horse valued at forty-five dollars. Martin Ringo’s war record indicates that his horse failed at El Gardo, Mexico, for want of forage and was abandoned October 30, 1846.⁴¹

Martin Ringo was now in harm’s way. On the evening of February 8, 1847, Colonel Alexander W. Doniphan left El Paso del Norte aiming for the city of Chihuahua. As the force neared the Sacramento River, Doniphan learned that the Mexican Army “in great force, had fortified the pass of the Sacramento river.” Doniphan was successful in gaining high ground and carried the day with minimal losses: one dead, one mortally wounded and seven men slightly wounded. The Mexican force lost three hundred men killed in the action and another three hundred wounded, many of whom died.⁴²

According to family sources, Martin participated in the battle of Sacramento, probably in one of the charges that captured redoubts flanking the enemy artillery.⁴³ Despite the poor firearms carried by many of the Mexican forces, it was dangerous and bloody work. Martin Ringo’s service during the Mexican War left him with a familiarity, if he had not already acquired it, with weapons and violent death. On June 21, 1847, he was honorably discharged at New Orleans.⁴⁴ The following day he appeared in the First District Court of New Orleans and filed for 160 acres of “Bounty Land.” He requested that the certificate be sent to him at Liberty, Clay County, Missouri. It was issued on September 9 of the same year.⁴⁵

When Martin reached Liberty he wasted no time in renewing his courtship of Mary Peters. The romance was marred by the death of Mary’s mother on January 20, 1848, but on September 5 of that year the young couple wed in Clay County, Missouri.⁴⁶ The *Liberty Tribune* announced “In this county, on Tuesday evening the 5th inst., by Rev. J. M. C. Inskeep, MARTIN RINGO, Esq., of Washington, Indiana, to Miss MARY, daughter of John R. Peters, Esq., of this county.”⁴⁷ Augusta’s husband performed the service. The Ringos then headed for Indiana where they planned to establish their home.

Indiana, seventh in population of the United States, was largely an agricultural state. The population was concentrated in the southern part of the state and had strong ties to the South where most of the citizens had originated. Madison was the largest city, with a population of 9,000. Indianapolis was second with 8,000. By 1850 the fires that ignited the Civil War had been kindled. Strongly unionist, Indiana was resolved to remain in the Union even if they had to swallow some unpalatable conditions. Ultimately the state chose a middle course, evidenced by Governor Joseph A. Wright’s denunciation of both the Northeast and the South.

One of the major issues dominating Indiana politics during the period was discrimination. The Ordinance of 1787 prohibited slavery, but while Indiana remained a territory, a strong

pro-slavery element successfully contravened the ordinance. Slavery was finally abolished in 1816 when strong anti-slavery forces drafted the state constitution. The constitution not only prohibited slavery, but also declared, “No alteration of this Constitution shall ever take place so as to introduce slavery or involuntary servitude.” The state supreme court ruled that the constitution effectively outlawed the practice, and by 1820 slavery in Indiana had ceased to exist.⁴⁸ The abolition of slavery did not end racial prejudice, and a code of infamous “Black Laws” was enacted.

Not everyone in the state agreed with the concept of discrimination. Chief among the opponents of those despicable conditions were the Quakers of Wayne, Randolph, and Henry counties who worked to repeal the Black Laws. In September 1838, the Anti-Slavery Society was organized in Wayne County at Milton. It was followed in 1841 by the Wesleyan Anti-Slavery Society, which also originated in Wayne County.

Politics in Indiana was a serious affair in 1850. Methodist clergyman Frederick J. Johnson in 1857 recalled a visit to Indianapolis. “Though moderate and temperate men in other matters, in politics they are most resolute and determined.” Johnson noted further that the citizens had “no forbearance” towards anyone with a diverging view.⁴⁹ It was amidst this era of change that John Ringo was born in 1850.

“passionate, domineering and dangerous”

WAYNE COUNTY WAS IN A STATE OF FLUX during 1850. In addition to the anti-prejudice movements, there were temperance and women’s suffrage movements. The latter movement was first organized in Wayne County. Meeting at Dublin in 1851, a group of militant women formed the Women’s Rights Association, declaring “that unless women demand their rights politically, socially and financially, they will continue in the future as in the past, to be classed with negroes, criminals, insane persons, idiots and infants.”¹

John Ringo was born in Clay Township in Wayne County, officially created in May 1831 on petition from Thomas Hatfield and others.² The date of his birth and the precise name of Ringo’s birthplace proved troubling to his biographers, at least in part because both the place name and its spellings changed. One biographer refers to the town as Greenfork.³ Another states that Ringo was born in Green Fork on March 3, 1850, noting that the town had previously been known as Washington Village.⁴ Ringo researcher Allen Erwin also mistakenly gave the date of John’s birth as March 3, placing it at Greensfork.⁵ Still another Ringo biographer places Ringo’s birth at “Washington (Clay Township), Wayne County, Indiana.”⁶ Since it was first created in the early 1800s the town has had many names. Even today the name is routinely misspelled.

The settlement was originally designated Westfield, but in 1818 it was renamed Washington in honor of the first president. During the late 1860s the name was changed to Green’s Fork because another Washington already existed in Daviess County, Indiana. In time the name was shortened to Greens Fork, which it officially remains today.⁷ It may be the only town in America that once had the name of a distinguished president but was “renamed in honor of a reputed murderer.”⁸

The town took its name from John Green, a controversial figure in early Wayne County history. Green was allegedly an accessory to the murders of Charles Morgan and Morgan’s two half-brothers in 1813.⁹ The brothers were working in their maple sugar camp when Indians attacked and killed them.¹⁰ Authorities had no proof of Green’s involvement and took no action against him.¹¹ The killing of John Shortridge the same year proved a different matter. Shortridge was ambushed while on his way to Germantown with Isaiah Drury. Suspicion fell on Green, but his guilt was never proven. Hearing that a mob planned retribution, Green fled. His ultimate fate remains unknown.

John Peters Ringo was born at what was then named Washington, Wayne County, Indiana, on May 3, 1850.¹² He was named for his maternal grandfather. The earliest located public record of John Ringo is found in William Russey’s September 26, 1850, census enumeration of the

“Free Inhabitants of Washington, Clay Township.” Russey noted them as family 665 in dwelling 665.

Martin Ringo	31	Kentucky
Mary	24	Missouri
John P.	2/12 [meaning 2 months out of 12]	Indiana
Sarah Singer	26	Ohio

John’s age is noted incorrectly, placing his birth in July. Martin’s property was valued at \$200.¹³ Details concerning Sarah Singer are lacking. No occupation is listed for Martin. Contemporary records are not enlightening. Martin had one milk cow, valued at twelve dollars.¹⁴ Equally uninformative is the Production of Industry Schedule, which names neither Martin nor any other Ringo in Wayne County.¹⁵ Martin apparently rented his home, for no deeds of property in his name have been located in the county.¹⁶ This evidence and his later life suggest that Martin worked as a laborer or, more likely, some sort of clerk. Martin’s occupation is further suggested by the presence of his brother-in-law Elias F. Halliday in the next residence. Elias is listed as a merchant, aged twenty-six, with his wife (Mancia) Jane, twenty-five, and their children Margaret A., aged two, and William Ringo Halliday, aged four months.¹⁷

John’s birth came as gold fever swept the nation. Following the discovery of gold in California, a mass of immigrants headed west. Wayne County was no exception, and by late 1848, Samuel C. Meredith had closed the *Wayne County Record* and announced his imminent departure. He was only one of many. The *Free Territorial Sentinel* of March 28, 1849, reported that Dr. John Pritchett, Daniel T. Woods, David B. Woods (editor of the *Whig*), John Bloomfield, Henry R. Hannah, John Frazier, Nathan Gibson, William Young, _____ Simmers, John M. Williams and Isaac Suffrins had left for the goldfields “on Monday last.”

In 1850 a local gold strike rocked the state. On April 25, the *Richmond* (Indiana) *Palladium* reprinted an article from the *Bloomington Tribune* announcing the discovery of “gold in abundance” in Brown and Morgan counties under the heading “Gold Mines of Indiana.” It was declared as “perhaps equal to the California mines.”

In the midst of this gold fever Martin and Mary Ringo remained immune, and this is informative concerning their character. Their lack of interest in the goldfields demonstrates a practical nature. Martin was described as a “very mild, pleasant and unassuming gentleman” who was highly esteemed by those who knew him.¹⁸ Martin’s decision to move to Indiana illustrates a desire to be close to his aging father. It can be inferred that he favored the Union although he apparently was not an abolitionist. Contemporary records indicate that at least once he handled slaves on a limited scale. Almost certainly he was a religious man and probably temperate as well.

Mary Ringo was a good match for Martin. She was certainly a religious woman. One contemporary newspaper reported that four of John Peters’ daughters were “professors of religion.”¹⁹ That Mary was temperate is beyond doubt. The *Liberty Tribune* noted that Peters had raised “five pleasant, sensible, amiable daughters.”²⁰ The couple held strong beliefs, but

practicality was their overriding trait.

It is at this point that a great deal of confusion has arisen over the identities of Ringo family members. Several writers erroneously state that Peter Ringo moved to Franklin County, Texas, in his later years.²¹ The confusion is logical. A Peter Ringo did live in Texas at that time, but he was a cousin of John's grandfather. While not closely related, the family of this second Peter Ringo would influence John Ringo in later years.

The Peter Ringo of Texas was a son of Samuel H. and Catherine Ringo, and was born February 19, 1800, near Mt. Sterling, Kentucky. His twin brother, Cornelius, apparently died young. In 1821 Peter accompanied his father to Howard County, Missouri, where on January 8, 1822, he married Edy (or "Ede") Jones, a daughter of James and Grace Jones, who was four years younger than he. By 1830 he had moved to Cooper County, where the family remained until 1839. Peter sold his farm to James English on March 26, 1839, and headed for Texas. On March 7, 1842, he received a land grant for 640 acres in Red River County based upon his three-year residency in the state.²² Census records indicate that Peter purchased extensive holdings. He then owned 5,800 acres.²³

Peter appears intermittently in the chronicles of Red River County. During 1845 he was on the arrangements committee for Clarksville's July Fourth celebration.²⁴ The following year he ran unsuccessfully for county commissioner.²⁵ Edy died around 1849, and some time after 1850 Peter remarried.²⁶ Peter gave every appearance of a hardworking, quiet citizen, but contemporary records indicate he had legal problems. On September 18, 1848, Andrew Barnes of Missouri sued him for the use of one Reuben Harvey on the grounds that Peter owed him \$800 on a promissory note dated April 26, 1845. Ringo countercharged that he had made full settlement on May 16, 1846, and that Barnes had owed him \$75. The case eventually went to the Texas Court of Appeals.²⁷

Peter Ringo apparently had some land problems as well, although the relevant file is now missing from the courthouse. One descendant alleged, "The file in Clarksville, Texas, courthouse concerning Peter Ringo (mine) [i.e., my ancestor] is missing—you can vouch for [Allen] Erwin stole it when he thought it was John P. Ringo's grandfather."²⁸ The 1850 census lists Peter as a farmer, age 40, with wealth listed at \$840. Living with him were six of his children.²⁹

There are indications of trouble between the Ringo family and other members of the community, possibly including the editor of *Northern Standard*, Charles De Morse. A few months after the census was taken, the *Standard* published an article under the banner "HORRIBLE TRAGEDY." Like other newspaper editors, Charles De Morse routinely filled spots in his paper with news from the East and Northeast. William M. Ringo was a second cousin of Peter Ringo. While the exact relationship between William and Peter Ringo was remote, De Morse likely knew what effect this article would have on the Ringo family:

In Fleming county, on Wednesday last, William Ringo had an altercation with Mr. _____ who had married his sister, whom he killed on the spot by a single shot from a revolver. Ringo's mother ran up to expostulate, when the inhuman monster fired two shots into her body from which she died the next day. His sister, the wife of the murdered man, then run [sic] up, when the fiend shot her through the thigh. She is likely to recover. He then made off; but the next day was pursued by the neighbors, who found him at the house of another neighbor. On seeing the company advancing, he entered the house. He was summoned to come out and surrender, but he refused, and while attempting to draw a pistol was shot through the abdomen by

one of the party. He then shot at another of the party, wounding him slightly in the shoulder, who thereupon fired back, killing the monster instantly. The parties surrendered themselves, were examined, and acquitted.

So horrid a tragedy does not often fall to the lot of the chronicler to record.—*Maysville Eagle*.³⁰

In 1854 the family encountered more serious difficulties. In an item headed “Stealing Mules,” the *Northern Standard* reported on October 7 “Green Caudle was committed to the County jail on Thursday last, on a charge of stealing two mules from the range, near Wm. Humphries in the County, and of offering them for sale for \$60.—The low price raised suspicion and led to his arrest.”

What the paper did not report until two weeks later was that while pursuing Caudle the sheriff had taken along warrants for the arrest of both Elias Ringo and one of his brothers, quite probably Robert. When the posse stopped at Ringo’s and inquired after Elias, Peter Ringo became excited and told the sheriff that “he and his sons would all shoot, had the best sort of tools always in the best sort of order, and warned him that if he came to take any of them, he had better come well prepared and bring a large force—that they would die before they would be taken.”³¹

Ringo’s threats did not go unheeded by Sheriff Edward W. West. An experienced lawman, West served as sheriff of Red River County from 1837 to 1850. He had been reelected sheriff on August 7, 1854, and served continuously until August 2, 1858. His term of service was the longest of any sheriff in Red River County.³² Forewarned of possible trouble, West led a posse of fourteen men to the Ringo home on October 17. None of the men were home. West detailed William Powers, James Ward, Marion Stanley, and a man named Simmons to watch the house while the rest of the posse continued.

West was scarcely out of sight when Peter Ringo rode up and shook hands with Powers. He then continued to the fence, where one of his daughters met him with his double-barreled shotgun and exclaimed, “Pa—there is Bill Powers—he is the first one who set foot on the place—shoot him.”

According to the *Northern Standard*, “As Ringo reached forward for the gun, Powers told him not to take it, or he would shoot. The reply was that it was his own gun, and that he would take it at the hazard of his life; he took it, cocked it, (the barrel of it being near Powers’ breast) and as he cocked it, after hearing the click of the lock, Powers shot him near the neck, the load of buck shot probably ranging toward the heart.”

When West and his party heard the shot, they hurried back. As they did, one of Peter’s daughters leaped the fence and seized the weapon from her mortally wounded father, leveling it at the posse. Further violence was averted. The *Northern Standard* editorialized that in Peter Ringo’s neighborhood “there has been for a long time a dread of the family as passionate, domineering, and dangerous.”³³ Peter Ringo died that night.

The other Peter Ringo, John’s grandfather, was in Wayne County in 1850. On September 21, this Peter Ringo was listed on the census as the head of household 380 in Centre Township by John B. Still. The household included fifty-nine-year-old Peter, a farmer born in Kentucky; Waldo Ringo, a twenty-year-old student; John Ringo, a nineteen-year-old male farmer; Martha Ringo, seventeen, and Marshall Ringo, eleven. All of the children were born in Indiana. Peter’s holdings were valued at \$4000.³⁴ Notably absent was Margaret Ringo who died on

May 15, 1849, while visiting their son William in Helena, Arkansas.³⁵ Her body was brought back to Indiana and interred in the old Centerville Cemetery.³⁶

The 1850s were a decade of grief for the Ringo family. On July 23, 1851, Martin's brother, Albert, died of "bilious fever" in Helena, Arkansas, where he was studying law with William.³⁷ On January 12, 1852, Hamilton Ringo died in Wayne County, Indiana, leaving a wife and five children.³⁸ Nine months later, on October 13, William Ringo died at Helena, Arkansas, where he had become Recorder of Public Money.³⁹ Another of Peter's sons, Waldo, died in Wayne County, Indiana, on December 29, 1853.⁴⁰ The deaths in rapid succession of his wife and four sons must have shattered Peter although his grief may have been tempered somewhat by the birth of Martin and Mary's second son, Martin Albert, on January 28, 1854.⁴¹

Psychological attempts have been made to determine "what made Johnny run."⁴² These are based largely on Mary Ringo's 1864 journal and a few letters from distant family members. Such an analysis is necessarily limited. The most impressionable period for any child is during the first twelve years of life. This information was apparently not available to the analyst to whom the Ringo family "simply materialized on the date and place of departure [Liberty, Missouri, May 18, 1864]."⁴³ Contemporary portraits by people who knew the family indicate that John was likely a good-natured child. The analysis fails to consider his aversion to mobs imparted to him by his parents.

In the 1850s a "spirit of lawlessness" infested Indiana.⁴⁴ In response, vigilante groups and mobs became common. In 1852 the state passed the Horse Thief Law sanctioning the formation of companies "for the detection and apprehension of horse thieves and other felons." In effect, the law gave private individuals the rights and privileges of constables.⁴⁵

The law had dire consequences. Mob activity rose throughout the state. Secret societies began regulating not only laws but also the morals of their communities. Lawmen were intimidated and feared to restrain the vigilantes. By 1859 Governor Ashbel P. Willard was feebly insisting that people arrested by the mobs should be tried in courts of law. An attempt to repeal the law failed, and vigilante activity continued well into the 1870s.

Wayne County's vigilantes were brazenly regulating the community's morals two years before the law passed. On April 25, 1850, the *Richmond Palladium* announced that the "Vigilante Committee" would meet on Thursday night (April 26) "for the purpose attending to the business entrusted to them by their fellow-citizens."⁴⁶

In 1856 the Ringo family resolved to leave Indiana for reasons unknown. Perhaps they were at odds with the principles of vigilante justice. Perhaps they left for economic reasons or to find a milder climate for Martin, who had contracted tuberculosis during the Mexican War.⁴⁷ Possibly their departure might be linked to the politics of the 1850s that toppled the Democratic Party from power in Indiana.

But whatever their reasons, in 1856 the family headed for Liberty, Missouri.

“Ringo & Pryor”

THE RINGOS ARRIVED IN LIBERTY during September 1856. The *Liberty Tribune* reported, “THANKS—We are under obligations to Madison Miller, Chas. De Spada, Geo. W. Morris, and Martin Ringo, Esqrs, for late St. Louis and other eastern papers.”¹ Here their daughter Fanny Fern was born on July 20, 1857.²

Given the numerous Ringo relations living in the region, the decision to relocate to Liberty was obvious. Among the first relatives they saw were Mary’s sister, Enfield, and her husband, Robert Miller. Miller founded the *Liberty Tribune* in 1846 and was a leading citizen in Liberty. They also saw Elizabeth Ringo, Samuel’s widow. Samuel had been part owner of the firm of Ringo, Wirt and Ringo, and Martin had worked for the firm during his previous stay in Missouri.

Ringo, Wirt and Ringo began as S. & A. H. Ringo and was founded by Samuel and Andrew Hodge Ringo, sons of Samuel H. Ringo and brothers of the Peter Ringo who was killed in Texas. Samuel, born April 22, 1798, near Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, came to Missouri in the early 1820s with his father. In 1824 he moved to Liberty where he married Elizabeth Ashby Wirt on April 6, 1826. He established a general store in Liberty and was on the first board of trustees along with John R. Peters when the town was incorporated in 1829.³ By 1850 he owned some \$10,000 in property.⁴ Known for his “sterling integrity and consummate ability in business,” he had died July 1, 1854.⁵

Andrew Hodge Ringo was born March 14, 1806, in Kentucky. When the Ringo firm was established, Andrew had a store in Richmond, Missouri. On September 2, 1830, he married Margaret Simms Wirt, Elizabeth’s sister.⁶ Like Samuel, Andrew prospered and by 1850 his property was valued at \$5,000.⁷ Ten years later his total worth was a staggering \$54,650.⁸

John Ringo was related on both sides of his family to these Ringos. Elizabeth Wirt, born in Scott County, Kentucky, on October 10, 1810, came to Missouri with her uncle, John R. Peters. Margaret, also born in Kentucky on April 18, 1815, moved to Ray County in 1832.⁹ They were the daughters of John R. Wirt and Mary Augusta Simms. Their brother, Philip, born April 6, 1814, in due course became a partner with the Ringo brothers and the firm was renamed. Philip Wirt had a general merchandise store in Gallatin, Missouri.

On March 3, 1858, Elizabeth Ringo sold her interest in the Gallatin business to her brother Philip for \$700.¹⁰ Elizabeth was a resident of Clay County at the time, and Martin may have accompanied her to Gallatin to execute the papers. He liked what he saw. Animosity between the Simms family and the Wirt and Peters families may have influenced Martin’s decision to leave Liberty as well. After Mary Ringo’s grandfather, Richard Simms, died on October 21, 1850, John, Benjamin, Joseph S., Margaret and Terissa Simms sued a number of the heirs,

as early as 1837. Clendenen engaged in many real estate transactions before turning his business over to Sheriff J. J. Minor in September 1858.¹²

On November 26, 1858, Martin Ringo appeared for the firm before Justice Hanley Webb and obtained a judgment against Thomas B. Sabins for \$48.79 in debts plus \$1.60 in damages.¹³ By December Martin had acquired a new partner, Bennett Brent Pryor.¹⁴ On December 29 the partners leased a stone house from John W. Sheets for \$200. The lease was to run until April 1, 1861. Sheets reserved for his father's use half of the building's back room, "so long as it is occupied for a Gunsmith Shop by Henry Sheets who now occupies it for that purpose." The building was to be used as "a store house and no other purpose," except with Sheets' consent. The lease was reassigned to Sheets for value received on December 3, 1859.¹⁵ Historian David Stark speculated that John Ringo may have had his first lesson in guns from Henry Sheets.¹⁶ That is possible, for in that time and place learning to handle a gun was as essential to a boy's education as learning to ride a horse.

Later researcher Allen Erwin incorrectly believed that "This same Captain Sheets was at one time a business partner of Martin Ringo Sr." rather than Bennett Pryor.¹⁷ John W. Sheets, a landlord rather than partner of Martin Ringo, was killed on December 7, 1869, by one of the James brothers who believed Sheets had helped track down "Bloody Bill" Anderson during the Civil War.¹⁸

The family had scarcely settled in Daviess County when Peter Ringo, John's grandfather, died. He had gone to Texas to visit his daughter, Martha, and her husband, Albert H. Black. Peter died at their home in Hopkins County on August 8, 1859. The *Indiana True Republican* noted his death on September 8 and printed an obituary on September 15, 1859.

Died, at the residence of his son-in-law, in Texas, August 8th, PETER RINGO, of this vicinity, aged sixty-eight years.

The fact of Mr. Ringo's death was mentioned in our last, but, as an old and estimable citizen, something more seems due to his memory. He came to Wayne County from Kentucky about 40 years since.—We knew him long and intimately as a friend and neighbor and can testify to his many exemplary qualities. He was a man of more than ordinary intelligence, and in his manners was a kind and courteous gentleman. In faith and practice he was a Christian, living a life of unobtrusive usefulness, following the paths of peace and universally respected. The worthy companion of his youth, with whom he lived so long and happily, like him was fated to die in the far South. Her remains were returned to this place for interment, and we learn that his are to take their appropriate place beside her.—There sweet be their sleep till the dawn of that resurrection morn, in whose advent they believed and trusted.

The *Indiana True Republican* of February 23, 1860, confirmed his body's return: "The remains of the late Peter Ringo arrived here from Texas and were deposited by the side of his late wife last week. His funeral was preached at the M. E. Church on Sunday by Rev. Mr. Bushong."

Martin was in court on October 15, 1859. The judgment against Thomas Sabins had not been satisfied, and on September 13, 1859, Sheriff James J. Minor seized "all the right title interest and estate" of Sabins. On October 24 Minor sold the land, some 120 acres near Gallatin, to Martin Ringo for twenty-seven dollars at public auction.¹⁹

On May 2, 1860, Mary Enna Ringo was born in Gallatin. The Daviess County census failed to note her when the family was recorded on June 2, 1860.

Martin Ringo	36 M W	Merchant	Kentucky
Mary	"	30 F W	Missouri
John	"	10 M W	Indiana
Martin	6 M W		"
Fannie	3 F W		Missouri ²⁰

In 1861 the Civil War erupted, and Union forces swiftly seized Missouri. Its status as a slave state within the Union divided the populace and created local troubles leading to guerrilla warfare that spawned such outlaws as Frank and Jesse James and the Younger brothers. Daviess County contributed some 900 men to the Union Army and 300 to the Confederacy. Mattie Ringo recalled in later years that her mother had Confederate money. While undoubtedly true, contemporary documents indicate Martin accumulated a considerable amount of United States funds.²¹ No evidence that Martin owned slaves has been located, but in 1862 he was party to a property transfer involving five slaves.

The indenture was executed February 7, 1862, between Silas H. Pryor, his wife Lavinia and Martin Ringo. At the time of their marriage Lavinia owned “by inheritance and of her own right” property in Ross County, Ohio. Silas sold the property and “appropriated to his own use” all of the funds. Silas stated that he wished to give Lavinia an equal amount of property equal to the proceeds of the sale. For one dollar Pryor sold his claim to five slaves to Martin Ringo. They were to be held “in trust however for the sole and separate use and benefit” of Lavinia who could sell them or hire them out as she chose.²² It appears Martin was acting as an agent so Pryor’s intent could be carried out and he did not benefit from the transaction. Regardless, Martin had more personal things on his mind. On April 28, 1862, Mattie Bell Ringo was born.²³

It is unknown when John Ringo first encountered violence. The first documented incident he may have witnessed was an 1862 skirmish at Cravensville near Gallatin and subsequent actions near the Martin Ringo farm. With most of the Union forces east of the Mississippi River, General John M. Schofield was assigned to raise troops for Missouri’s defense. Schofield ordered every town to raise cavalry regiments and companies. Gallatin raised three units: Company A under Captain Joseph H. McGee, the county clerk; Company B captained by William H. Folmsbee, a local physician; and Company G under Captain John Ballinger, a hotel proprietor. All three were under the overall command of Colonel James H. B. McFerran, a lawyer from Gallatin.²⁴ Another, Company C, was formed by men under Aaron B. Vickers, a forty-two-year-old farmer from Illinois.

On August 5, 1862, Vickers received orders to move his men to old Camp Everly. After resting his horses in Gallatin, Vickers moved to a ford south of Cravensville. Unknown to Vickers, Confederate General Sterling Price had sent orders to his recruiters to march on Independence and Lexington during the second week of August, and Confederate sympathizers were moving south to join the planned attack. On the afternoon of August 5, Captain Jesse Clark had hidden his men in the bush south of Cravensville in preparation for a night move.

As Vickers approached the ford, he sighted Clark’s camp and was fired upon. The bulk of Clark’s men were unarmed raw recruits who broke and fled. In the ensuing skirmish six rebel

soldiers were killed and ten others wounded and captured along with their mounts. Vickers' unit suffered five wounded, three of them severely. During the night two more companies joined Vickers and Colonel McFerran took command.²⁵ The Union troops captured three more men.

Two of the prisoners, Thomas Hicklin and Daniel Hole, were identified as previously paroled rebels. The men were executed by a firing squad as nightriders and bushwhackers near the Ringo farm. John Ringo may have witnessed it.²⁶

Even if John Ringo did not witness the executions, he was aware of the bushwhackers who "pillaged and terrorized the country." One band killed David Lockwood during 1864 in the western part of the county. They also attempted to kill John Meadows but were thwarted by the courage of his wife, Nancy, who sat in their home's doorway holding a candle in one hand and a butcher knife in the other allowing her husband time to escape. Family tradition relates that the men attempted to disguise themselves but Nancy "held her lighted candle in their faces, which had been painted black, and announced, 'I know every one of the black devils!'"²⁷ Such acts increased Ringo's revulsion toward mobs and nightriders.

Martin continued in business with no hint of disruption throughout 1862 and 1863. On March 4, 1863, his name appeared in Daviess County for the last time when Bennett Pryor appeared in court and acknowledged the sale of land to Martin on November 23, 1859.²⁸

In 1864 the Ringo family prepared for another move. Martin had contracted tuberculosis during the Mexican War, and the disease's symptoms were becoming more pronounced. Health deteriorating, he resolved to move to California "where he thought it would be better for him in a milder climate."²⁹ One biographer astutely adds that "the problems associated with the ongoing Civil War probably provided another good incentive to relocate."³⁰

“I pray God we may get along safely”

MOST WRITERS BEGIN JOHN RINGO’S LIFE during 1864 using Mary Ringo’s journal, kept during their trip to California. It was originally transcribed by Mattie Ringo in 1942. Only three months after she finished it, Mattie died, and another fourteen years passed before her children published a printed version of her transcript in limited edition.¹ In 1989 the journal was first published commercially and made available for researchers.²

Unfortunately however, it has been used indiscriminately as “evidence” for predetermined agendas. Using the journal as his authority, one writer suggests the document indicates Mary was neither “given to thoughtful observations and effusions” nor prone to either introspection or analysis, adding that her “lack of grammatical skills leads to the conclusion that she lacked the skills necessary for clarification of her thoughts.”³ It is a harsh judgment, but is the journal alone, as printed by grandson Frank Cushing, adequate for this determination considering the circumstances under which it was written? Dr. William K. Hall had access to the diary in 1970. Hall insightfully writes, “I find the diary quite interesting although a bit laconic. But when you think back to the conditions under which it was written—the extreme hardships and the intense fatigue the poor woman must have suffered you are amazed she had the courage at the end of the day to write anything at all.”⁴



Mary Peters Ringo. Courtesy author's collection.

A note in the journal provides further insight. “The contents of this ‘*Journal of Mrs. Mary Ringo*’ was taken from a copy of the original manuscript which has become quite illegible over the past ninety-two years. We have followed the original spelling, punctuation and capitalization.”⁵ If the original journal was “quite illegible” in 1956, it doubtless was already quite faded when Mattie transcribed it in 1942. Combined with Mattie’s failing eyesight, this could contribute to irregularities of grammar.

Obviously Mary kept the journal for her own pleasure. When she wrote it is unlikely she considered that historical researchers would be interested in her family. The journal was intended as a memory jogger for her letters home and for her own amusement. Mary also had five children, two of them less than five years old, was pregnant with a sixth, and had to maintain a family on the trail. It is a wonder that she managed to keep a journal at all.

The family left Liberty on May 18, 1864. Mattie recalled: “We had two large covered wagons, one drawn by oxen and one by mules, we brought a lot of things, a large bed and dresser, a number of heavy books besides all the things necessary for a long trip.”⁶ That the family needed two wagons, one of which carried “heavy books” does not indicate poverty or illiteracy. Many families had far less.

Mary recorded their departure with obvious sadness. “Left my family and started on my long trip across the plains, went 10 miles, had some trouble with the oxen and camped for the night

and here I took my first lesson in camp life, cooked my supper and went to bed but couldn't sleep until after the chickens crowed for day and after a short nap I awoke.”⁷

On May 19 they reached Leavenworth, Kansas. Mary reports that “the children have the pleasure of seeing a steamboat.” After crossing the river, they purchased supplies in town. John was driving the oxen. Here a “gentleman by the name of Owen drives the mules up in the city for me while Mr. Ringo helps Johnny with the oxen here.”

The following day the Tipton, “Cirby,” [sic: Kirby] and “Dr. Moors” families joined the Ringos in Leavenworth.⁸ One of the Tiptons' wheels broke and the party stopped to repair it. Mary's entries for the next several days record little more than the weather and distance traveled. On June 1, rain forced the train to stop. Mary noted that the “gentlemen went fishing and caught a great many fish.” The company spent the evening listening to some of the travelers playing their violins.

Six days later, on June 7, 1864, the train experienced its initial brush with sudden, violent death: “Today Johnnie got his foot hurt quite badly by the wheels running over it . . . a little boy was run over by a wagon and killed and a wagon master by the name of Hase [Hays?] killed one of his teamsters, shot him through the head. The murdered man leaves a wife and children.”⁹

The company remained in camp on the eighth to hunt. “We lay over for the gentlemen to go buffalo hunting, they stay all day and until one o'clock at night, they came back very much elated having killed a nice buffalo . . . Johnnie goes along notwithstanding his foot is very sore, he says they saw a great many Elk and Antelopes.”

As June progressed Mary's entries grew longer. On the twelfth she posted letters to her sisters, Vienna and Enna.¹⁰ The following day they reached Fort Phil Kearny, where hopes for letters from home were dashed. The next day, Mary noted that John was ill: “Johnnie has a chill when we stop and now seems quite sick. I hope it may not be anything serious. Johnnie remains quite sick tonight.”

John's illness did not prevent the company from moving on the following day. On June 18 Mary noted they “passed fewer ranches than any day yet.” They also found an Indian scaffold, which they observed but did not molest. Mary found it of extreme interest, noting that the body was “not straightened as we straighten our dead but the feet are doubled round most to its head and it is tied up in blankets.”

On the twenty-first the company stopped to gather wood. “Mr. Ringo, John and Allie [Martin Albert Ringo] take the wagon and go up a canyon some 2 1/2 mi. and get plenty of good dry Cedar, they tell me it is the most beautiful place in these mountains, every variety of flowers. We hitch up at noon and travel 10 miles and camp on a lake called Fremont—it is a beautiful place.” This is hardly the writing of a woman “not given to thoughtful observations.” Of Lake Fremont she writes: “To look at it you would not think it any ways deep but it was over the cattle[']s back[s], we had a laughable time driving them across the lake, some of them would jump in and go under as though they enjoyed it very much.”

Similar entries follow. On June 23 she saw some antelope she thought were “beautiful.” Three days later she and Martin walked to the river whose “water does look so swift, they are crossing wagons quite fast.” She also wrote that Indians visited the camp. One had a saber, and

when asked “where he got it, he said he killed a soldier and took it.”

Mary had natural curiosity and humor. On July 9 she notes she “saw some beautiful flowers.” On July 11 she recorded a more sobering event. “This morning we have to mend the wagon and I take a long walk and climb to the top of the highest bluff, on one of them is the grave of W. Cramer who was shot by accident. We have several Indians to come in our camps and trade for buffalo robes and antelope skins. . . . In the night the wolves come in and howl and scares me a good deal at first.”

Mary’s enthusiasm continued unabated. On July 13, 1864, they passed “the great Courthouse rock . . . I would have been delighted to have gone up close to it.” The following day they passed Chimney Rock. Mary writes “this is another grand edifice, you can see it for some 20 miles, it is a 150 feet high, the chimney being some 70 feet in height.” Mary also noted mundane matters. On the night of July 13–14 one of the Ringos’ mules, Kate, ran off with a horse belonging to the Tipton family. Martin spent most of the day hunting for the wayward animals before finding them.

What none of the train knew was that troubles with the Sioux were continuing. On August 18, 1862, the Santee Sioux had gone on the warpath in Minnesota. The uprising has been ascribed to “a combination of ineptitude and deceit, cultural and racial arrogance, and obscene cheating and greed” that pushed the Santee beyond endurance.¹¹ Into this war zone the emigrants now rode.

On July 15 the train had a brush with an Indian war party. They had traveled about ten miles to a “telegraph office” where they were warned of war parties attacking wagon trains. “We did not think much of it and had gone on some 2 miles when they attacked [*sic*] two of our wagons.” The wagons had taken the wrong road but the main group moved on “knowing that they could see us and would cross the prairie and come to us.”

At that moment of vulnerability, the Indians attacked. The wagons were lucky. Firing from the train forced the attackers to flee across the river where they killed a man on another train. The same day a wagon train led by a Mr. Morris joined that of the Ringo family, swelling the number of wagons to sixty-two.

On July 16 they passed Scott’s Bluff. Three days later there was a near tragic encounter with Indians. The party had traveled some ten miles at night but formed a defensive corral twice, “thinking the Indians were going to attack us but we mistook friendly Indians and one of our train fired at them . . .” Fortunately no one was injured. Mary anticipated trouble “as the Indian has gone to the Fort to inform against us.” Her premonition was correct. The immigrants were detained until they made peace with the Indians by paying them flour, bacon, sugar, and coffee. At Fort Laramie Mary also received a letter from her twin sister Martha.

The train left the fort on July 21. On July 25 news of hostilities arrived. “This morning early some emigrants came to camp who had a man killed by the Indians last night . . . I pray God we may get along safely.” Two days later, Mary wrote, “We find posted on a tree a notice that the Indians have killed six men near here. We hear they had a fight ahead of us.” Tensions ran high, and on July 28 Mary wrote that a raiding party killed some men and took the women prisoner three miles from camp, in what is known as the Kelly-Larimer massacre.¹²

It was a harrowing time. On the twenty-ninth the party passed “the corpse of a man lying by the side of the road, scalped.” The same night a man named Davis went out to gather his horses

and was shot through the arm.¹³ The wagon train spent some tense moments awaiting an attack, and the men guarded the train through the night.

Worse came on July 30. William H. Davenport wrote:

The shooting of Mr. Davis created considerable excitement in camp, as we expected to be attacked by Indians in force. The whole company stood guard during the night so as to be prepared in case we were attacked. Just after daylight on the morning of the 30th ult. Mr. Ringo stepped outside of the wagons, as I suppose for the purpose of looking around to see if Indians were in sight, and his shot gun went off accidentally in his own hands, the load entering at his right eye and coming out at the top of his head. At the report of his gun I saw his hat blown up twenty feet in the air and his brains were scattered all directions. . . . He was buried near the place he was shot in as decent a manner as was possible with the facilities on the plains.¹⁴

The shock of Martin's death to Mary was profound: "And now Oh God comes the saddest record of my life for this day my husband accidentally shot himself and was buried by the wayside and oh, my heart is breaking, if I had no children how gladly would I lay me down with my dead . . . may no one ever suffer the anguish that is breaking my heart, my little children are crying all the time."¹⁵

A modern writer states Martin received a quick burial in a hidden grave.¹⁶ This baseless tale is not supported by Davenport's account. In 1982 historian Ed Bartholomew located the grave. Bartholomew described the discovery succinctly: "in 1982 I worked hundreds of miles of the Oregon Trail and finally walked up to two lonely graves. I knelt down in the brush and inspected a flat gravestone which evidently had lain there over a century . . . I made out a faint inscription on the nearly buried headstone. It read simply, 'M. RINGO.'"¹⁷

Martin was killed while raising his gun. It got "caught in his boot strap as the boots were worn over his pants."¹⁸ His death was a brutal blow to the family, and sympathetic government officials offered Mary an escort of soldiers to return to Missouri. She declined because it "wouldn't seem like home without father."¹⁹

The train moved onward on July 31. "I and Allie drive our mules they are very gentle and go so nicely." One author has seized on this and poses the question of where John was.²⁰ The journal clearly states John had driven the oxen since leaving Liberty.²¹ "Young John was 14 years old. A young man doing a man[']s work. It was his duty and obligation to see the family through to San Jose." John was certainly capable. "Young John was a crack shot at 14 years of age. He provided much of the caravan with birds and game along the way."²² For all practical purposes John Ringo left his childhood behind that tragic day in Wyoming.



Martin Ringo's gravesite. *Courtesy author's collection.*

Mary was undecided about her plans. The *Liberty Tribune* reported “Mrs. Ringo thinks of going to Salt Lake and of disposing of her outfit at that point and taking the stage from there to California.”²³ Mary’s journal entries do reflect grief, but her interest in her surroundings continued. At the Platte River she noted on August 1, “There is a company of soldiers here who seem to be very fearful of an attack from the Indians.” The following day she writes: “I am so anxious to be moving, time seems so long to me. This morning quite early a good many of the Rappahoes [Arapaho] tribe came in to camp but seemed quite friendly . . . every one is very kind but I am so lonely and tonight Fanny has an attack of cholremorbus and after she gets easy I rest better than I have any night since the death of my dear husband. Oh God help me to bear this hard trial.” And on August 8: “We passed Independence Rock and it is a grand sight, many names are carved there, some few of whom I knew.” At Hell’s Gate on August 9 she wrote, “I do not think it an appropriate name for the grand and sublime scenery.” August 14: “the night is beautiful. We pass several trains and their campfires look so cheerful.” On August 21 she wrote “This is the most beautiful river I ever saw—tis very rapid and the water looks green and is very clear.” Near Church Buttes on August 24 she found “the sand hills are grand looking domes.”

On August 26 they reached Fort Bridger, in what is now Wyoming. John, driving the slower

ox wagon, arrived later. August 28 was Sunday, and Mary writes that they stopped. "I am glad that we do. I do not think it is right to travel on the Sabbath."

The wagon train arrived at Salt Lake City on September 6, remaining three days. Mary was reminded of how far they were from home. She received two letters, both written to Martin. One was from her sister Mattie, the other from Elias F. Halliday. Mary toyed with the idea of selling her outfit but was advised not to. She then hired John Donly to drive the oxen so that her son John could drive the mules.

After September 8, Mary's entries became shorter. On the twenty-first she noted that their mule, Bet, was sick. The next significant entry is dated October 6 and hints that something may have gone wrong with her pregnancy: "had a very bad hill to climb and a worse one to descend. I walk down which brings on a spell of sickness for tonight I am very poorly."

On October 7, the family reached Austin, Nevada, where Mary was pleasantly surprised to see her cousin Charley Peters "and my old acquaintance Mr. Ford from Liberty, Mo. They are very kind and assist me to dispose of my oxen and wagon." On October 8 Mary Ringo wrote her final journal entry: "We remain in Austin, Nev."

Mary Ringo and her daughters are portrayed as "humorless," "lacking in introspective powers," and having a "strong religious background."²⁴ The journal shows this assessment both incorrect and unfair. While she was certainly religious, the harsh judgment based on her journal and unsubstantiated statements of people who never knew her are wrong. Between May 18 and October 8, 1864, there were twenty Sundays and Mary wrote on every one. Only four reference religious topics. On June 19 she heard a good sermon, and on the twenty-sixth hoped to hear another. The other two entries were August 21 and 28, after Martin's death. Religion did not dominate her. What concerned her most, when not occupied with her children, were her surroundings. Judged from a neutral standpoint she emerges as a well rounded, literate woman.

“Mrs. Mary Ringo, Proprietress”

THE FINAL ENTRY IN MARY’S JOURNAL ENTRY provides no hint of the tragedy that befell her, but Mattie added an explanation to the *Journal* : “In Austin she had a son born, fortunately it was still-born for he was horribly disfigured from seeing father after he was shot. Even my brother [John] who was fourteen years old noticed it and said he looked just like father did.”¹ That loss and the subsequent weakness is undoubtedly why Mary abandoned her journal.

Mattie’s writing does not indicate a belief in “divine retribution or intervention” as one writer has advanced.² When she transcribed Mary’s journal in 1942, Mattie relied on what others told her of the 1864 events when she was an infant. “I will have to finish as best I can from things she [Mary Ringo] told us at different times.”³ This reference indicates Mattie was rationalizing what she recalled. The statement indicates she used second-hand accounts, not that she interpreted them correctly. Quite likely the child did look like his father, a common comment even today. Mattie was two in 1864. In 1942 she was the last of the family. There was no one left to clarify her recollections nor any witnesses to the tragedy who could correct her notes. Further, she was writing for her immediate family, not public consumption.

The family remained in Austin long enough for Mary to recover. Logic dictates they stayed with Mary’s cousin, Charley Peters. The family sold some of their possessions in Austin, and Mary purchased stagecoach tickets to San Jose, California. John followed, driving the mules and one wagon.⁴ Erwin states, “The Mormons treated her and family rather shabby. They sold much of their belongings they had valued and had brought from Missouri, for practically nothing. Mary Ringo and the Children boarded a stage coach to San Jose, and John driving along with a team of mules and wagon made the trip into San Jose which is quite a few hundred miles over rough country.”⁵ In contrast Mattie writes, “I don’t know how long we stayed in Austin, probably a week or ten days and I don’t know how we made the rest of the trip. We took the mules and one wagon to San Jose and she [Mary Ringo] told of stopping in San Francisco.”⁶ There is no mention that anyone treated the family shabbily although the possibility must be considered.

That Mary allowed fourteen-year-old John Ringo to make the long and dangerous trek to California alone speaks volumes. The mules, pulling a heavy wagon, would not be able to keep up with the stagecoach. At fourteen John Ringo had developed independence and self-sufficiency. In time, these qualities, combined with his intelligence and toughness, drew men to him as a leader. Mary certainly recognized those traits in her son.

The family probably arrived in California in December. Mary intended to be close to her sister Augusta in San Jose. It has been contended without merit that Colonel Coleman Younger

gave them a “shack” to live in, then left them to their own devices.⁷ Mattie remembered the “shack” well: “My aunt and her husband had a very large place and Mr. Younger raised blooded cattle. They had a small house on the place that had formerly been a carriage house made into a house. We lived there a year as mother was not able to do anything for some time.”⁸

The tarnishing of Coleman Purcell Younger’s name is unwarranted. An uncle of the outlaw Youngers, Coleman was born to Charles Lee Younger and his second wife, Sarah Sullivan Purcell, on April 18, 1809, at St. Charles, Missouri. Younger first married Elinor Murray on April 30, 1829. The marriage lasted for sixteen years until her death in 1845. Younger then married Rebecca Smith who died on December 27, 1850. During this time he served several terms in the Missouri legislature.

How Younger met Augusta Peters Inskip is unknown, but on March 17, 1851, they were wed. Augusta’s first husband, Reverend James M. Inskip, had died in 1849. Following their marriage they moved to Santa Clara County, California. Mary indicates she was writing to Augusta, and it is reasonable that the family planned to settle in Santa Clara County. By 1853 the Youngers had established their ranch near San Jose. Younger planted apple, peach, and pear trees there, christening the ranch Forest Home. He was breeding Durham cattle and thoroughbred Kentucky horses as early as 1857.

His contemporaries thought highly of Colonel Younger. While visiting Mexico around 1851 he was offered a high government position that he declined. He was one of the main organizers of the Santa Clara Valley Agricultural Society.⁹ “The family always regarded Col. Coleman Younger as a very fine gentleman.”¹⁰ There is no doubt that Younger assisted the Ringo family.

It is equally certain that John Ringo abandoned his formal education in California to help support his family. During that time he labored as a dairyman and a muleskinner as well as a farmer and cowboy.¹¹ Probably he worked for his uncle, Colonel Younger, learning the cattle business. At the same time his mother and uncle undoubtedly encouraged him to continue his studies at his home.

Mary Ringo was a good mother, and her main concern was for the future of her children. One of her first concerns was that her children might lose their inheritance. While the reasons for her actions are unclear, on June 6, 1865, John Ringo made his first court appearance.

In the matter of the estate and guardianship of John P. Ringo, Martin A Ringo, Fannie F. Ringo, Mary E. Ringo Mattie B. Ringo, Minors

In the Probate Court of the County of Santa Clara and State of California.

To the Hon. Isaac N. Reinir Probate Judge of the County Probate aforesaid.

I the undersigned one of the minors above named above the age of fourteen years do hereby nominate and respectfully request your Honor to approve Mary Ringo (my mother) my guardian.

John P. Ringo¹²

Additional papers were filed concerning the guardianship late in 1865. Mary Ringo as principal and C. T. Ryland, J. C. Smith, and John F. Pyle as sureties bound themselves to the children in the “Estate of Martin Ringo deceased.” The estate was valued at “Sixteen Hundred Dollars lawful money of the United States of America.” The document was sworn to on November 20, 1865, and the bond was sworn before Court Commissioner C. B. Younger on February 10, 1866.¹³

That Martin’s estate was worth \$1600 “lawful money of the United States of America” illustrates Mattie’s confusion in 1942 when she wrote that her mother had “confederate money and she lost 36 dollars on the hundred.”¹⁴ Frank Cushing later informed distant cousin Charles Ringo that Mary was in serious financial shape when she reached California.¹⁵ The source of the misconception was Mattie. While well off for the moment, their funds were not inexhaustible. John was indeed a school dropout. He had to work to help support his family until the younger children became self-sufficient, hardly a disgraceful act. His brother Martin also quit school for the same reasons. The Ringos were not destitute as attempts have been made to portray them.

Much of Ringo’s life from his arrival in California until he arrived in Texas is a matter of speculation. John Ringo met his uncle’s namesake, Cole Younger, during 1865. Thomas Coleman Younger, born January 15, 1844, to Henry Washington Younger and Bursheba Leighton Fristoe in Jackson County, Missouri, was a high-spirited, impulsive man with a quick mind and a captivating personality. Younger joined Quantrill’s guerrillas following an altercation with a Union soldier named Irvin Walley. In response, Missouri militiamen killed Younger’s father on July 20, 1862. Cole Younger participated in the sack of Lawrence, Kansas, on August 21, 1863. Following an assignment in British Columbia, he arrived in California sometime during the spring of 1865 and remained through the fall.¹⁶

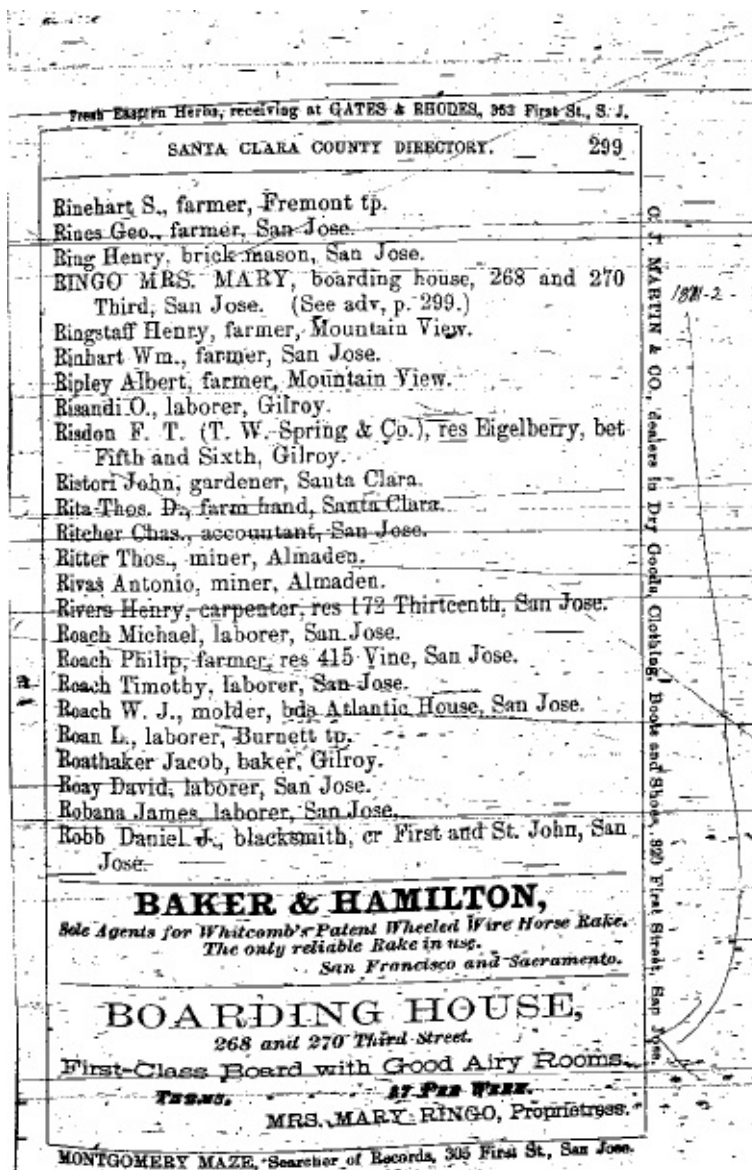
Charles Ringo alleged that Cushing informed him John had become a teenage alcoholic and left the family “in the lurch” in 1869.¹⁷ This would be a serious charge if it were not demonstrably incorrect. John did not leave San Jose in 1869. The San Jose city directory for 1870 notes the presence of “Ringo, John, farmer, dwl 524 Santa Clara” along with “Ringo, Mary Mrs., dwl 524 Santa Clara.”¹⁸ Moreover, the federal census clearly places John in San Jose on July 25, 1870.

Mary Ringo	43	keeping house	Missouri
John	20		Indiana
Albert	16	printer	Indiana
Fanny	13		Missouri
Enna	10		Missouri
Mattie	8		Missouri

Mary’s personal estate was valued at \$400, her real estate at \$3000, more than twice the value it had in 1865. The girls had all attended school within the last year.¹⁹ By the standards of the times, the Ringos were well off.

Sometime after the 1870 census was taken, John left home. “At nearly twenty-one years old, an age at which many young men of this era had already left home or even been married, the time had come for Ringo to head out on his own.”²⁰ When he left he was assured that the family had a steady income beyond his brother’s wages. The San Jose City Directory for 1871–1872 shows Mary Ringo operating a boarding house at 268 and 270 Third, San Jose, and refers readers to an advertisement on the same page:

268 AND 270 Third Street
 First-Class Board with Good Airy Rooms.
 TERMS, . . . \$7 PER WEEK
 Mrs. MARY RINGO, Proprietress²¹



1870 Santa Clara County Directory showing Mary Ringo's boarding house. Courtesy author's collection.

John's sisters saw nothing out of place in his departure. "He did not leave San Jose on account of any crime he had committed, he went to southern California with a harvesting outfit."²² The family was not left "in the lurch." John and Martin's hard work and thrift provided the family with a sustainable income and permitted their sisters to remain in school.

Given the inaccuracy of the assertion that John Ringo abandoned his family to poverty in 1869, Charles Ringo's claim that John was a teenage alcoholic is suspect. Two possibilities present themselves. One is that Frank Cushing deliberately misled Charles. Believing that Cushing misled Charles to his uncle's detriment is ludicrous, however, particularly if there is any merit to claims made that the family was defensive of John Ringo. The other possibility is that Charles formulated assumptions himself based on another source and ascribed them to

Cushing to give them greater weight. The belief that Cushing did not hold back with Charles is inconsistent with what is documented concerning the family.²³ A man anxious to disassociate himself from his uncle would not reveal all to a stranger, even a distant cousin. Nor would he fabricate a tale clearly denied by his mother. David Leer Ringo, who knew two of John's sisters, summed matters up succinctly. John Ringo was not a teenage alcoholic.²⁴

While documentation shows John Ringo's family made no such statements, the question remains of why Charles Ringo came to believe John was a teenage alcoholic. This incorrect assumption was based on another source. One of the early family members to express an interest in John Ringo, Charles Randolph Ringo was born September 16, 1899. On July 25, 1968, he sent Dr. William K. Hall a brief sketch of John Ringo's career.²⁵ David Leer Ringo, historian and author, revealed the source of Charles' information in 1981: "In the early 1930's his brother, Henry Raleigh Ringo, called his attention to mention of a John Ringo in the book 'Tombstone' by Walter Noble Burns. . . . The story by Charles Randolph Ringo . . . was a direct quote from page 135 of the Burns book."²⁶ Charles Ringo based his story and assumption on the highly readable and always questionable *Tombstone* by Walter Noble Burns.

While Charles Ringo derived and disseminated a great deal of misinformation from Burns, he nonetheless had the family genealogy. Thus his declarations provided a superficially credible combination of fact and fancy. Hall recalled Charles Ringo with affection but cautioned, "Charlie Ringo was quite interested in the family history and read all the magazine and book accounts of Johnny Ringo so it is difficult to tell how much he knew from family accounts and how much he had learned from the fictionalized accounts."²⁷ May Ringo King similarly cautioned, "I would not rely on anything Charles gave in his letters. He was not a genealogist and he loved a good story. . . . His interest in Johnny came out after Burns' book was published."²⁸

Beyond this, descendants who knew him during the Hoo Doo War, both friends and enemies, answered unanimously: no one had ever heard of John Ringo being an alcoholic. David L. Ringo summarized, "it is indeed unfortunate that [Professor Burrows] concluded that Charles R. Ringo was a genealogist and historian, but did not make contact with those working in the Ringo family area who were. . . . He [Charles Ringo] loved a good story whether factual or not."²⁹ Another Ringo biographer concurs. "In actuality, there is no evidence whatsoever that Ringo was a teenage alcoholic or delinquent in San Jose, and when he left home it appears that his family was financially secure and not in a difficult situation."³⁰ Charles Ringo died on December 21, 1974. He was a grand gentleman, but not a credible source of information. Sadly, in his desire to see a biography of John Ringo in print, he further contributed to the Ringo myths.

In the years following his departure from San Jose, John Ringo's life is obscure. "Ringo's activities during the next six years are still clouded by mystery."³¹ One writer placed Ringo in Texas with the rhetorical question, "What did he do between 1869 and 1875 when he first appears in newsprint?"³² Sans any evidence he suggests that Ringo was leading a life of "reckless prodigality," implying that Ringo had become an outlaw.³³ A more mature view was presented by one reviewer who offers astutely that, "merely because there is no documentation

for [Ringo's] actions does not automatically place him within outlaw gangs.”³⁴ One writer states that Ringo returned to Indiana and lived for a time with John R. and Elvira Funk, his aunt and uncle, then went to both Gallatin and Liberty, Missouri.³⁵ Another offers simply “in late 1870 or early 1871, Ringo left California heading east, probably to visit family there.”³⁶

A general framework of Ringo's “missing years” from late 1870 through 1874 can be constructed. He left home with a harvesting outfit which indicates a fall departure.³⁷ John probably returned after the harvest to spend Christmas with his family. It is unlikely he would have tried to cross the Rocky Mountains during the winter months, and a reasonable departure date is probably between late March and early May 1871. In the interim he very likely worked for his uncle.

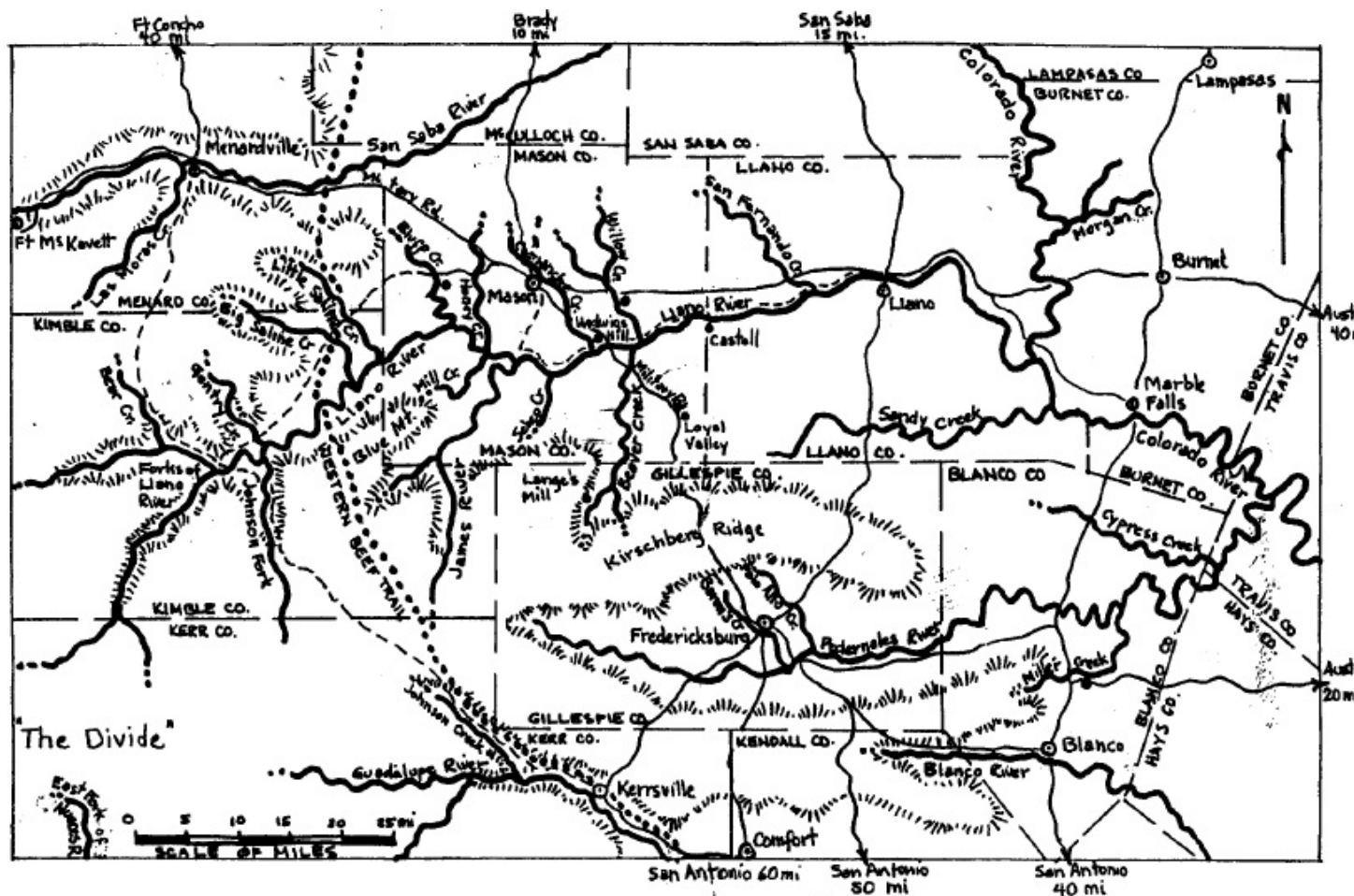
John's absence from the San Jose City Directory for 1871 confirms his departure that year. “I understand that he went back to Missouri to settle some land problems.”³⁸ Mary Ringo's will supports this. “My son John Ringo having been here to fore provided for I bequeath the sum of one dollar.”³⁹ John could only have been provided for from his father's estate. In May of 1871 John turned twenty-one, old enough to handle legal transactions. He had no need to return to Indiana where his grandfather's estate had long since been settled. There was nothing unusual about his departure.

According to the late historian Ed Bartholomew, John Ringo and Bruce Younger returned to Liberty, Missouri, arriving sometime in the spring of 1871.⁴⁰ In Missouri the early legends of John Ringo would begin.

“The people he fell in with were fighters”

HOW LONG RINGO REMAINED in Missouri is unknown. One early myth, not confirmed by school records, has him attending William Jewell College.¹ Yet primary sources indicate Ringo had a better than average education. Logically he must have found a means to study, albeit informally. One who may have assisted was Elizabeth Wirt Ringo. The inventory of her husband's estate listed numerous books, including the *Life of Henry Clay*, Xenophon's *Anabasis*, Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*, Doniphan's *Expedition*, three volumes of Oliver Cromwell's letters and speeches, and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* among others.² It was a remarkable collection that could provide any intelligent and interested reader with the makings of a good education. People raised on the frontier, as most of John's later associates were, likely assumed his education came from college.

In Missouri Ringo probably tried his hand in business although this has not been confirmed. It cannot have lasted long. In California Martin Ringo contracted tuberculosis and died on August 29, 1873. The *Liberty Advance Tribune* reported his death “of consumption” on September 19, 1873. When John learned of Martin's death is uncertain, but it could not have been a total surprise. The symptoms would have manifested by 1872. He knew of his brother's condition through family letters.



MAP OF CENTRAL TEXAS AT TIME OF "HOO-DOO WAR", 1874-76

Courtesy Pete Rose.

Financially secure in 1871, the family's situation would have been changed by Martin's disease. In 1874 the San Jose City Directory no longer listed Mary as the proprietress of a boarding house, noting simply "Ringo, Mrs. Mary, (widow) dwl 524 Santa Clara."³ With the knowledge of his brother's death came worse news for John: Mary had contracted tuberculosis. Mary was unable to maintain the boarding house, and John had no alternative except to help his family. Ringo researcher Allen Erwin confirms this: "His life purpose was in getting ahead, and returning to his own immediate family which he was attached to."⁴

Choices were limited. If he was going to provide his family with anything more than a hand-to-mouth existence, he needed to find work offering better wages than a farm hand or clerk. The only trade he truly knew he had learned from Coleman Younger, that of a stockman. The growing cattle trade attracted him, and in the 1870s cattle were synonymous with two things: money and Texas. It appears that he left Missouri during 1872 or 1873.

Ringo first stopped in Hopkins County, Texas, where Peter Ringo's family lived. According to Era Fay Huff: "John P. Ringo visited these relatives when Samantha V. Ringo was a young girl. She did not remember much about the visit. I have always maintained that he spent a longer time in Texas than is thought by writers; most of it was probably spent in Burnet County."⁵ Samantha V. Ringo was a granddaughter of Peter Ringo by his son Robert William and Mary Jane Walker. The oldest of six children, Samantha was born June 9, 1857. In 1872 or

1873 she would have been fifteen or sixteen.

Here Ringo made contacts with the Jones family through Edy (or Ede) Jones Ringo, the wife of Peter. Edy was related to Andrew Jones who had arrived in Missouri with his brothers from Hardeman County, Tennessee, around 1831.⁶ The Jones boys were “coarse, rough mannered, illiterate men given to horse racing and gambling.” Andy was the worst of the lot. A rumored horse thief, Andy Jones was a veteran of the Slicker War waged in Polk and Benton counties in Missouri.⁷ The Slicker War was started by Hiram Kerr Turk’s family. The Turks were violent, hot tempered, and overbearing neighbors. Hiram Turk was shot in July 1841, and died from his wound on August 10. The Turks believed that Andy Jones was one of the killers. In retaliation, Hiram’s son Thomas organized a vigilante committee, the Slickers, named after their first raid where they whipped or “slicked” several men.⁸ In the ensuing violence Jones fled to Texas.

In 1844 Andy Jones and two of his anti-Slicker cronies, Loudrich “Loud” Ray and Harvey White, were captured in Fannin County. The men had robbed and murdered some peaceful Indians, a crime the *Northern Standard* properly termed “barbarous.” The killers were tried and hanged by their captors on July 10, 1844.⁹

From these families, John Ringo gained firsthand knowledge of Texas. Land in the northeast was taken up, but the sparsely settled frontier counties offered abundant opportunity. John had family connections in the area. Isaac Jones had settled in central Texas, and a William Ringo took up land in Blanco County on November 6, 1874.¹⁰ There were family friends such as the Caudles in the region as well. It was a logical step for John to move to the Texas Hill Country.

Where exactly in the Hill Country John Ringo settled is uncertain. In 1996 this author theorized he might have been John Ringer of San Saba County. Subsequent research disproves this theory.¹¹ What is certain is that “Ringo was caught up in history at the right time. . . . The fact he was fearless, and known for coming to the heart of a situation without asking any favors, he won the respect of such men as John Wesley Hardin. . . . The people he fell in with were fighters. He was loyal to his friends.”¹²

The cattle trade offered ample opportunity for industrious men. Unprofitable until 1867, the industry was revived by the dreams of Joseph G. McCoy. McCoy envisioned supplying eastern markets with Texas beef and successfully established a railhead at Abilene, Kansas. On September 5, 1867, the first shipment of cattle headed east and over the next twenty years millions of cattle were driven to Kansas. One cattleman drove 600 head of cattle to Kansas at a cost of \$5,400 and sold them for in excess of \$16,000. The Texas census of 1860 notes roughly three and a half million domestic cattle, but wild cattle swelled the ranks considerably. Many cattlemen got their start by “mavericking,” defined in a contemporary book:

The ownership of the young animal is determined by the brand of its mother. . . . It is . . . a universal practice to capture any unmarked and unbranded animal upon the range and mark and brand the employer’s brand, no matter to whom the animal may belong so be it is over one year old and is unbranded.

It is easy to see that any energetic, enterprising ranchman can greatly increase the number of his stock by this means.¹³

Ranchers such as Carl Lehmberg and Daniel Hoerster offered \$5 a head for each maverick, and a hard worker could earn enough to set himself up on a small ranch. Ringo headed for the Hill Country where he met the men who dramatically impacted his future. Many lived along the Colorado River boundary between Burnet and Llano counties. Nearly all of them were

cattlemen.

Foremost among them was Joseph Olney's family. Joseph Olney was born in Virginia in 1811 to Joseph and Amelia Graves Olney. In 1836 he married Mary Katherine Tanner, the daughter of John Allen Tanner and Minerva Thrower. They were an old family. Thomas Olney, the first family member in America, had been a founder of Rhode Island. Another owned the Liberty Tree during the Revolutionary War.¹⁴

Joseph Olney came to Texas via Mississippi where he owned eleven slaves, four male and seven female.¹⁵ The oldest Olney children were born here: Minerva Catherine "Kate" on May 21, 1837, and John Tanner on April 3, 1841. Prior to 1845 the family settled in Burleson County, Texas, where most of their children were born: Samuel Young on September 9, 1845; Joseph Graves on October 9, 1849; Ann A. on March 4, 1853; William Wallace on February 3, 1854; Daniel Stirling on January 3, 1856, and Edward Thrower on June 1, 1859.¹⁶ Around 1860 the family moved to Burnet County where George Anderson was born on December 21, 1861, and Oscar Roberson on April 5, 1865.¹⁷

The family was wealthy. One document dated September 23, 1847, illustrates part of their holdings.

A list of Mary K. Olney's separate property to wit one Negro boy Robert 17 years old one Negro woman Amey 60. Do. One Negro girl Louisa 9, Do. Seventy seven head of Cattle, one horse, 50 head of hogs, one waggon [sic] and three yokes of oxen 102 one hundred and two acres of land.

I do solemnly swear that the within property is my own to which I have a good and valid title to same.

Mary K. Olney¹⁸

In 1850 their land was valued at \$2,881.¹⁹ Prior to arriving in Burnet County, they sold their slaves.

Both John Tanner and Samuel Young Olney served in the Civil War. Burnet, Llano, Mason, and San Saba counties organized a joint company for frontier defense. John Olney later enlisted in Company A, Morgan's Texas Cavalry, on March 26, 1862.²⁰ Sam Olney remained with the Rangers until they were mustered into J. E. McCord's Company K, Mounted Volunteers, on July 2, 1863.²¹

Of the Olney brothers, Joseph Graves Olney, better known as Joe Hill in Arizona, was John Ringo's closest friend.²² Joe had some early brushes with the law over gambling. On August 10, 1872, he was indicted for exhibiting a Monte Bank.²³ He was also indicted for gaming along with a number of others, including Bill Faris, E. V. "Pete" Casner, Sam Olney, Moses Baird, Hiram Casner, William Ake, R. E. "Bud" Faris, Ben Faris, and John Faris.²⁴ Joe served in John Alexander's Minute Men, Company O during 1872. The company engaged Indian raiders, probably Comanches, and "captured all their horses. Said property returned to their owners."²⁵ He married Agnes Jane Arnold and their first child, Benjamin Keyser Olney, was born October 15, 1871.²⁶

Wealthier still were the Tanners. Joseph Olney Sr.'s father-in-law, John Allen Tanner, was born December 11, 1799, in Virginia to Jonathon Tanner and Mary Young. His father died of pleurisy on November 15, 1803.²⁷ Tanner married Minerva Thrower on December 10, 1819, in Brunswick County, Virginia. The couple had one child, Mary Katherine in late 1818 or early

1819; she was to become Joseph Olney's wife.²⁸ Following Minerva's death, Tanner is believed to have married Ann Kirkpatrick around 1820.²⁹ During the 1830s the Tanners migrated to Mississippi by way of Tennessee where John Allen's brother Samuel Young Tanner had settled.³⁰

The 1840 census shows that John A. Tanner had thirty-four slaves, twenty males and fourteen females. Like his son-in-law, Tanner was a farmer and sold his slaves prior to moving to Burnet County.³¹ In 1847 Tanner married Angelina A. Choate, born August 14, 1818, in North Carolina.³² By 1850 the family was in Burleson County holding land valued at \$1,870. The census lists John Taner [*sic*] as a farmer born in Virginia and shows that the Choate sisters came under John's care following his marriage. There was also Alice Gray, the daughter of William and Matilda Choate Gray, age four.³³

The 1860 Census shows Tanner's real estate valued at \$1,636 and personal property valued at \$12,000. Alice Gray, now fourteen, held personal property of her own valued at \$1,100.³⁴ Among Tanner's children were Allen Young and Samuel Tanner, both of whom participated in the Hoo Doo War in Mason County, Texas.

The 1860 Census also confirms the oral tradition that the Olneys knew the Baird brothers in their youth. A. P. Baird, aged twenty-nine and born in Tennessee, is noted with four children: John R., thirteen; Moses, eleven; Marietta [*sic* : Mary Etta], eight; and Laura, six. All of the children were born in Missouri and had attended school within the past year.³⁵ They came to Texas from Madison County, Missouri, where their father, Hartshorn Baird, married "Arminty Eten" on August 11, 1846.³⁶ John R. Baird was born here around 1847 and Moses B. on September 25, 1850. Two daughters were born in Missouri also: Mary, born around 1853 and Laura Ann, on February 16, 1854. Laura Ann Baird later married Sam Olney. The family moved to Burnet County around 1868.³⁷

The Baird brothers were hot-tempered men given to fighting. On June 3, 1869, John was indicted on two charges of assault and battery.³⁸ The charges were reduced to assault on April 19, 1870. Baird was fined \$1 plus costs.³⁹ On November 30, 1870, the remaining charge was quashed.⁴⁰ In the years following the Bairds were in court frequently for fighting.⁴¹

Court problems did not preclude them from public service. On September 8, 1872, John Baird enlisted in Company Q of the Minute Men under F. C. Stewart in Llano County, serving as first corporal until August 9, 1873. Official reports indicate that John Baird was on active service from September 8 through September 15.⁴² On May 1, 1873, John married Nannie Robison.⁴³ They had a daughter, Edna, during 1875.

Also along the Colorado River were the Faris brothers.⁴⁴ Solomon Boone Faris, born December 2, 1823, married Laurinda Hinds in Marshall County, Alabama, on January 5, 1842. Laurinda, a daughter of Benjamin Hinds and Polly Mary Childress, was born in Blount County, Alabama, on February 20, 1823. The couple had two daughters, Mary Elizabeth and Laura Ann, and five sons: John Byram, William Jasper and Champion "Champ" Newton (twins), Benjamin A., and Robert Elihu "Bud," all of whom were involved with Ringo. The family patriarch Solomon Faris died on May 12, 1857, of tuberculosis compounded by pneumonia. "I understand she [Laurinda] served as a sort of practical nurse when families had illness, and

that she was aided by her brothers Ben and William, and possibly one named Levi Hinds.”⁴⁵ Uncle Ben Hinds would teach Laurinda’s children far more than the cattle trade.

Born in Alabama on April 27, 1818, Benjamin J. Hinds saw service in the Mexican and Civil wars. By the end of the Civil War he was widely recognized in gaming circles by men such as John Wesley Hardin.⁴⁶ He was a noted man killer, having admitted killing one man in Little Rock, Arkansas, and another in Lockhart, Texas. His contemporaries openly charged him with others. Hinds preferred a knife to a gun, a skill his nephew Champ Faris was noted for. To his nephews Hinds transmitted his personal philosophy: “when they called him, he was always there.”⁴⁷ The Faris brothers earned their reputations as tough men.

The Faris family was related to the Casners through the marriage of Elihu E. Casner to Margaret Ann (Margery) Hinds. The Casners also played their role in the Hoo Doo War, particularly E. E. Casner’s son, Edward Vontress “Pete” Casner, born February 5, 1857.⁴⁸ His uncle, Hiram Casner, had served with John Olney during the Civil War.⁴⁹

Charges against these families during Reconstruction range from gaming to assault with intent to kill and murder. Uniformly they were hot-tempered men, but there is no evidence suggesting they were other than cattlemen prior to the Hoo Doo War.

Another man who had lived along the Colorado River before Ringo’s arrival was Timothy P. Williamson, kinsman of the extensive Johnson family. Williamson had settled in Mason County at Loyal Valley although his brother Frederick still lived in Burnet County. The Williamson brothers had no criminal charges against them.

Also living in the Burnet-Llano area and allied with the Bairds were the Redding brothers and their kinsmen, the Lacys. William Zachariah Redding was born near Forsyth, Georgia, to James M. Redding and Elizabeth Francis on February 3, 1850.⁵⁰ Redding and his brother Thomas Searcy Redding, born around 1854, migrated to Texas following the Civil War.⁵¹ The brothers settled in the Marble Falls area where Bill Redding married Loveda Ann Lacy.⁵² Here they entered a business partnership with Burnet cattleman A. G. Roberts who was in turn connected to the Cavins.

There were other families involved as well, including the extensive Cavin clan, the Murchisons, and the Sneed brothers. Writing in 1875, Mason County attorney Henry M. Holmes reported that Moses Baird was “a man of large connexions [*sic*].”⁵³ The Bairds had, literally, dozens of friends and kinsmen and the allies they could bring with them. Among them was John Ringo.

By 1874 John was working in the area and sending what funds he could to his family. On December 25, 1874, he celebrated Christmas in Burnet. During the festivities he fired a pistol across the town square. On April 5, 1875, he was charged with disturbing the peace.⁵⁴ At the time Ringo was indicted, Moses Baird was charged with playing cards in a public place, also on Christmas day. It is likely the two men were together.⁵⁵

Regardless, John Ringo had braved his first brush with the law. Considering the circumstances, it was relatively innocent. That would soon change. Within a year he would be charged with murder, and his friends would be involved in serious trouble.

Some of them would be dead.

“back-shooting border scum and thieves”

NEWSPAPERS HERALDED IT as the Mason County War or the Mason County Disturbances. Locally it was called the Hoo Doo War, and the troubles were never confined to Mason County. It was an ethnically divisive, brutal affair that began with two factions seeking range domination in Mason and Llano counties. Best known for the violence in Mason County during 1875 and 1876, it began earlier and lasted longer than the period of Ringo's involvement, nearly thirty years.¹ One historian concerned with Ringo's role in the fighting correctly attributes that phase of the war to the murder of Tim Williamson.² Williamson's death and the subsequent killing of Moses Baird mark distinct turning points in the conflict. The first brought in Scott Cooley, the latter John Ringo.

Simplistic reasons have been given for the feud's outbreak. One ascribes the feud's origins to the Civil War and the animosities that grew out of it. Others blame ethnic animosities between the recent immigrants from Germany and those from other parts of the United States. Concerning John Ringo, a writer incorrectly states that Ringo joined the Scott Cooley “gang which operated with the Americans when it suited their purpose.”³ Another, referring to the Cooley faction, states organized outlaw gangs took “advantage of the German-American feud.”⁴ Elsewhere the author states that Ringo joined the Cooley gang, “a gaggle of back-shooting border scum and thieves,” and maintains that Cooley's gang “intruded” into a range war that “became a complex and bloody three-way struggle” with the Cooley group preying on both sides.⁵



Photograph of three unidentified Texas Rangers. The author believes that the man seated on the left is Scott Cooley. *Courtesy Chuck Parsons.*

These alternative views diverge significantly from the primary sources that C. L. Sonnichsen and other historians base their accounts on. Sonnichsen clearly understood the conflict's underlying causes: lingering Civil War animosities, ethnic hatred, cattle ownership, the poor laws governing the industry, and greed. Family alliances, intra-family animosities, and revenge fueled the violence. The conflict began “ostensibly over cattle ownership between German settlers in the Mason County area and American born men” living in neighboring counties. The Germans “made continuous allegations” that their cattle were being stolen by the Americans. The Americans retorted that they were the proper owners and “had the right to gather their own stock.” Confusion over stock laws and mob violence intensified the conflict.⁶ Ringo’s involvement was due to his friendship with the Bairds.⁷ By the time John Ringo was drawn into the violence questions of cattle ownership had been replaced by blood vengeance.

The Hill Country’s German population arrived in the mid-1840s. They faced cholera, hostile Indians, and a harsh land totally unlike Germany. With spirited determination these families spread to New Braunfels, Fredericksburg, and Mason where they established lasting homes.⁸ Trouble began immediately. The Mexican War prevented the immigrants from reaching the lands that had been promised them. Stranded in New Braunfels, a stopping-off point along the route, Rudolph Iwonski incited disgruntled colonists to riot on December 31, 1846. Little more than two weeks later a man named Schubbert attempted to organize a second revolt that also

failed.

Germany in the 1840s was a patchwork of small states dominated by Prussia and Austria and frequently at war, and the German colonists understood that strength lay in unity. Mason County's settlers voted against leaving the Union and attempted to remain neutral during the Civil War. Gillespie County immediately south of Mason was far more vocal and formed the Union Loyal League. Deeming it subversive, in 1862 the Texas government moved to suppress it.

Sixty-one members of the league fled toward Mexico under Major Fritz Tegener. The Confederates surprised them along the Nueces River on August 10. Nineteen men were killed outright. Nine others were captured and executed without semblance of due process. The Confederates pursued the remainder to the Rio Grande and killed nine men on October 18.⁹ The Germans never forgot or forgave, and as late as 1925 one German writer stated that the executions were "a crime unjustified by even the rules of savage warfare."¹⁰

The differences between German and American settlers went beyond politics. The colonists clung tenaciously to their language and culture, speaking German in church and school into the early 1900s. "Children learned English by mingling with the English speaking families as they grew up."¹¹ Discussing the "anti-Dutch" antagonisms of the post-war years, one historian writes, "The difference in languages virtually eliminated any clarification of each group's thoughts and reasons."¹² In effect two cultures lay superimposed over one another.

The Germans in Mason also differed from their counterparts elsewhere. "The Fredericksburg German element was and still is more fun-loving, more easy going than the Mason County Methodists," a Mason-born educator recalled. "The Fredericksburgers love their *Gemütlichkeit*, their easy-going disposition and geniality, as much as the Mason County Methodists love their piety."¹³

These differences are clear in the words of "Dreux." Writing to the *Austin Statesman* in 1875, Dreux charged that the feud's outrages had been "perpetrated almost exclusively on Germans as a class, by a numerous and bloody band of outlaws gathered from *all* (emphasis added) the surrounding frontier counties."¹⁴ In Mason, German locals were quick to accuse their neighbors of complicity in cattle theft and murder, often without evidence. Germans in Gillespie County were not exempted from the accusations.

This siege mentality persists to a certain extent today. American participants in the war are referred to as outlaws, while the Germans "tried to reach a peaceful and legal solution to their problems."¹⁵ A local writer ascribes the war's cause to "penniless" Americans who arrived in Mason County from the South following the Civil War. They "saw the German families with large land holdings, big herds of cattle and good substantial holdings. They saw the smaller, poorer houses of Americans here. . . . Greed and envy undoubtedly appeared."¹⁶ Contemporary records do not substantiate this. The majority of the "American" fighters came from outside Mason County. Most had either been born in Texas or settled there before the war. "Peter" wrote: "The Germans, who as a class are farmers, and have small gentle stocks of cattle, accused the stock men of stealing their cattle."¹⁷ The cattlemen denied the charges.

Max Krueger, a German pioneer involved in the feud, recalled of the Mason Germans, "They kept true to their native virtues and faults . . . the worst was their discord and paltry

jealousy of such of their countrymen as were more successful in business or unable to get used to their narrow way of thinking and acting.”¹⁸ Krueger found them “very clannish, and a newcomer was not welcomed.”¹⁹

Cattle complicated the trouble. Prior to the war, cattle were essentially worthless and the laws concerning them mainly local. One tradition was accommodation marketing. A man finding his neighbor’s steer in his herd could sell the animal, then return the profits to the rightful owner.²⁰ Such transactions were recorded in M. L. Hayes’ drive book. Entries around 1875 illustrate the marketing system. The book names Bill Redding as the owner of one of the larger stocks of cattle, forty-four head. Ben Gooch, another cattleman, had nine head. Other entries were for only a single cow.²¹ Of course, not every rancher was as honest as Hayes.

Brand laws were local, and any individual could use any brand not previously registered in that county. In theory three different men could record identical brands in adjoining counties.²² On open range, that could and did lead to conflict. Men in the cattle trade registered the same brand in many counties. Stock notices were common.

STOCK NOTICE

ALL parties are hereby notified not to use, drive, or remove from the range either in Burnet or Lampasas counties, any STOCK owned by Roberts & Cavin, excepting parties legally authorized by us as agents. And for reference to the stock owned by the above firm, parties are hereby referred to the records of marks and brands in each county named.

Parties are hereby notified that the law will be enforced in regard to posting cattle in the county where the mark and brand is recorded.

A. H. CAVIN
A. G. ROBERTS
L. W. CAVIN²³

In December 1873, Mason County voters elected John Clark, “a good man and Democrat,” as sheriff.²⁴ German residents considered Clark an “efficient officer.” His opponents charged that Clark used his office to persecute personal enemies.²⁵ Texas Ranger Dan Roberts knew Clark as a “blue hen’s chicken,” a term of contempt used for southerners supporting the Union following the war to advance their own careers.²⁶ John Clark, former Confederate officer, was such a man.

In 1996 this author theorized that “Based on a family member’s unsupported statements, Clark has tentatively been identified as John Rufus Clark.”²⁷ John Rufus Clark, born to Isaiah and Sarah Elizabeth Low on May 24, 1849, was living in Burnet County in 1860.²⁸ This John Clark is probably the man listed in Company N of the Minute Men of San Saba County during 1872.²⁹ Based on this theory, one writer advanced the premise that Ringo killed Clark in 1878.³⁰ Subsequent research confirms that my 1996 conjecture was not correct and that John R. Clark was not sheriff. He died of food poisoning while on a hunting trip.³¹

While there has been much confusion about Sheriff John Clark’s exact identity, Jerry Ponder’s research demonstrated that the Mason County sheriff was John E. Clark, son of William and Mary Elizabeth Worley Clark, who was born around 1834 in Callaway County, Kentucky.³² By 1857 the family moved to Ripley County, Missouri. Clark joined the Confederate state militia and was captured in 1863 with a serious leg wound. Clark’s tenure as

sheriff began with controversy when his predecessor refused to surrender the office.³³ It continued to be marked by unpunished violence. Four months later, on May 7, 1874, the *Houston Daily Telegraph* noted dryly, “Mr. Morrison, in Mason county, was shot to death a few days ago, by a party of unknown men.” Who Morrison was and the motives for his killing remain unclear. No arrests were made. It is not even clear if any serious attempt to identify the killers was made. The pattern would repeat itself in 1875.

During the summer of 1874, eleven Burnet and Llano county cattlemen rode into Mason County to gather their cattle. A letter to the *Burnet Bulletin* signed by six men, including their leader, M. B. Thomas of Burnet County, shows they knew “the animosity that some of the people of that county have toward nonresident stock men” and hired two men from Mason to stay with the herd and “cut-out every animal that might get into the herd belonging to anyone in that county.”³⁴ The drovers held the herd across the line in Llano County. Learning of the drive, Clark gathered a posse consisting of the German faction, rode into Llano County, and arrested the herders. The cattle were driven back into Mason County and scattered. Clark took the men to Mason and held them on the grounds that several of the beeves were not theirs.³⁵

The Llano arrests were a sensation, one paper reporting that “A letter from Mason, dated on the 14th inst., states that ‘great excitement exists at Quihi on account of the Sheriff of Mason arresting 11 of the Llano cow boys. Some 40 of their friends came in and attempted a rescue but failed in the attempt.’

“This disturbance like many others is attributable to the confusion caused by the stock law.”³⁶

Ernst Jordan described the alleged rescue attempt. Forty men had ridden past his home on their way to Mason, and he “knew what it meant; they were coming to release the prisoners or to make trouble.”³⁷ Jordan took a different route to Mason, rounding up forces as he went. The two groups met in Mason, but there is no suggestion that the American cattlemen intended any violence. Thomas and his men were released on bond. As the cattlemen returned to Llano and Burnet someone shot up the schoolhouse at the old Willow Creek settlement. The vandalism was blamed on Thomas and his men who denied any involvement. Thomas also denied that his men were outlaws. The evidence indicates that he was telling the truth.³⁸

This incident is central to the violence of 1875. In addition to the American cattlemen Allen G. Roberts and Thomas, V. P. Hamilton, G. L. Gardner, Newberry H. Holton, A. F. Hanson, George C. Arnett, B. K. Hamilton, S. M. Sharer, Joe Gardner and F. J. West were charged.³⁹ The posse has been identified as Clark, James A. Baird, Jacob Durst, Barnard Durst, Peter Jordan, Henry Doell, Leo Zesch, Fritz Kothmann, Frederick Schmidt, J. G. Durst, August Leifeste, Daniel Hoerster, August Leifeste Sr., August Leifeste Jr., Frederick Schmidt and Christian Oestreich.⁴⁰ It is theorized that the Bader brothers, Peter and Carl, and one of the Kothmanns, either Dietrich or Wilhelm, rounded out the posse.⁴¹

Marshall Brackston “Brack” Thomas, a son of schoolteacher John Preston and Amanda Payne Thomas, was born December 2, 1850, in Kentucky. In 1860 the family was living in Burnet County, and by 1863 Thomas was punching cattle.⁴² The 1870 census lists him as a cattle drover along with his brothers James and Oliver.⁴³

Thomas was not a troublemaker, but on February 4, 1868, he was indicted with three others

for killing a dog. Bail was set at \$200. The case was tried on October 23, 1868. Thomas pleaded guilty and was fined one penny. During the court terms of winter 1871 and spring 1872 Thomas served a bailiff in Burnet.

Another leader of the cattlemen was Allen G. Roberts. He was born in Illinois during August 1845 to William Roberts Jr. and his wife Lucy Methiabile Ladd.⁴⁴ On July 2, 1863, Allen Roberts enlisted in Captain William G. O'Brien's Company K, Mounted Volunteers, of the Frontier Regiment.⁴⁵ On November 2, 1863 he married Louisa Brantley in Williamson County, Texas.⁴⁶ The 1870 Census for Burnet County lists him and wife Louisa with two children, William and Kate. His occupation was "driving stock" with personal property valued at \$1,000.⁴⁷ His name appears frequently in Hayes' drive book associated with W. Z. Redding and others. Roberts later served in various law enforcement positions including that of deputy United States marshal.⁴⁸

The third signatory to the letter to the *Burnet Bulletin* was William Zachariah Redding. More controversial than Thomas or Roberts, Redding was a cattle dealer with a considerable amount of stock in Mason and other counties.⁴⁹ He was born near Forsyth, Georgia, on February 3, 1850, to James M. Redding and Elizabeth Francis. Following the Civil War, he and his brother Thomas came to Texas where he married Loveda Ann Lacy.

The remaining names on the letter were Olney kinsmen: John and Moses Baird and A. T. Taylor. Abraham Teal Taylor, son of David and Jemima Stanford Taylor, was born in Cherokee County, Alabama, in 1849.⁵⁰ The Taylors were a wealthy family that moved to Burnet County in the mid-1850s where David Taylor engaged in ranching. The 1860 census listed Taylor's wealth as \$6,000 in real estate and \$2,000 in personal property.⁵¹ Abe Taylor was as hot-tempered as others involved in the feud. Contemporary records confirm that Abe was arrested several times for fighting in Burnet. Taylor had been engaged in a lawsuit with Daniel Hester, a mavericker employed by Mason County brand inspector Daniel Hoerster in Burnet County. The case was not resolved until August 4, 1874, when they settled out of court and the action was dismissed.⁵² Taylor and his wife, Ann Olney, later sheltered John Ringo and helped clear him of cattle theft allegations.

Thomas hired two men he knew and trusted to guard and register the cattle during the roundup. Both were key figures in the feud. One appears to have been Tim Williamson, who had lived in Burnet County during the late 1860s and early 1870s. The other was probably George W. Gladden, a Missouri-born wrangler who had been in Mason since at least 1872. Both were living in Loyal Valley, and both were later targets of mob violence.

Given his close alliance with the Olney family, it seems likely, although impossible to prove, that Ringo was one of those who accompanied John Baird to Mason. On their return Thomas and his men swore out a warrant in the office of Llano County Sheriff W. W. Saxon for robbery and false imprisonment against Clark and his posse.⁵³ Thomas remained apprehensive. "It is true the sheriff and his posse have each of them been indicted by the grand jury of Llano County . . . but this will not afford us protection in the future."⁵⁴

Truer words were never written.

“The mob has been operating some”

THE YEAR 1875 began deceptively calm. Lieutenant Dan Roberts of Ranger Company D wrote his commander Major John B. Jones, “Nothing having transpired of much interest since my report of the 1st.”¹ The year might have seemed equally uneventful for John Ringo despite the charges of disturbing the peace that he faced in Burnet. They were hardly serious, and Ringo was undoubtedly busy gathering cattle for the upcoming drives to Kansas.²

On February 12, 1875, once again Clark crossed a county line and arrested cattlemen where he had no authority. He arrested Elijah and Pete Baccus and eight others on Brady Creek in McCulloch County. Among those arrested were Abe Wiggins, Tom Turley, and Charley Johnson. All were charged with illegally driving a herd of cattle beyond the county line without having had them inspected, not with theft of cattle. Mindful of his blunder of the previous year when he drove the cattle across a county line without inspection, Clark committed a yet worse one, abandoning the herd without leaving anyone to preserve the integrity of the evidence. Clark lodged his prisoners in the Mason jail on February 13 to await a preliminary hearing.³ All of them made bond and were released. Four immediately left town. The rest remained and were promptly arrested a second time.



Daniel Webster Roberts. *Courtesy Chuck Parsons.*

The leader, Elijah Baccus, was a son of Joseph Clark Baccus and Lucinda Brown and was born around 1850 in Lamar County, Texas.⁴ By 1860 he and brother Charles were living with an uncle, Thomas Baccus, in Collin County, apparently due to the looming divorce of their parents. L. Peter “Pete” Baccus was his cousin, the son of Benjamin Baccus and Roxanne Stovall, and was born around 1856 in Collin County.⁵ By 1870 the family had moved to Denton County.⁶ Here Joseph Clark Baccus married Rachel Cook on March 1, 1866.⁷ None of Joseph’s family has been located in the 1870 census, but sometime during this period Elijah married Josie Bigelow.⁸

On August 10, 1874, the poll taxes for 1875 were approved for Mason County. “Elija Backas” was listed as owning forty-seven horses and six hundred cattle within Mason County but no land.⁹ This clearly indicates that he was a nonresident cattleman.¹⁰ Mason residents knew the family. Naomi Cox Miller recalled, “I knew the Backus boys quite well and often danced with them.”¹¹ In the fall of 1874 Elijah Baccus sued future mob member and outlaw Caleb Hall in Mason. The court found for the defendant and ordered payment of \$17 plus costs to Hall on November 1. A new trial was granted in December when the cause was dismissed.¹²

It appears the Baccus cousins left north Texas and headed for the Hill Country due to the

Lee-Peacock feud. Elijah's aunt, Louisa Baccus, had married Henry Boren on February 22, 1849. During the feud, Boren sided with Lewis Peacock. Other Boren family members sided with Bob Lee.¹³ It is likely that they initially went south to avoid involvement in the feud.¹⁴

Of the remaining drovers, only Charley Johnson has been identified with certainty. Born February 17, 1859, to Frank and Elizabeth Townsend Johnson in Llano County, Charles Walker Johnson and his family had already suffered a full measure of tragedy.¹⁵ During 1863 they moved to Kimble County, settling on Little Saline Creek.¹⁶ Frank Johnson was killed on October 12, 1867. Charley's brother Asa recalled, "My father was killed by Indians when he grew careless and one morning ventured out without his gun to hunt his horses. The Indians, who had concealed themselves in the tall grass, ran him down and killed him with their arrows and scalped him."¹⁷

Elizabeth Johnson now insisted on moving the family to the relative safety of Llano County. They resettled at Legion Valley, where they planned to winter at the home of Adam Bradford. On the afternoon of February 5, 1868, Becky¹⁸ and Samantha Johnson¹⁹ accompanied by their cousin Mandy Townsend²⁰ and their youngest children went to the home of kinsman John Friend. Friend asked them to stay with his pregnant wife Tilly while he went to Fredericksburg.²¹ That evening Indians raided the cabin. Tilly Friend, wounded and scalped, escaped doom by feigning death. The others were less fortunate. The raiders left a trail of bodies: Fielty Johnson, three-year-old Nancy Elizabeth Johnson, Becky Johnson, Samantha Johnson, and Becky Townsend. The young women were raped prior to their murders. Only two of the captives were recovered: Lee Temple Friend and Malinda Caudle, a daughter of Green Caudle who years earlier had been linked to Peter Ringo. Charley was certainly doing a man's work by age sixteen.²²

Of the remaining prisoners of Sheriff Clark little is known. Nothing is known about Wiggins. Tom Turley was born around 1855 and was described as light-haired with blue eyes and heavily built.²³ The last was a local boy, John Martin, born around 1864 to William W. and Nancy Yoakum Martin.²⁴

The violence toward suspected cattle thieves began on February 17, five days after he arrested the drovers, when a man was found dead on the road between Mason and Menard. Lucia Holmes, wife of attorney Henry M. Holmes recorded, "A man found killed on the road with a card saying he wouldn't stop killing cattle so they killed him."²⁵ Rancher Tom Gamel recalled later that the man had been arraigned in Mason, "charged with the theft of a yearling." The day after the case was continued, Adam Bradford found him along the road with "the inscription 'Here lies a noted cow thief' pinned to his back."²⁶ The victim appears to have been Allen Bolt, a son of William James and Lavinia Watts Bolt, related through marriage to Charley Johnson. "We had exciting times in those days. . . . Among those who lost their lives [was] . . . a boy named Allen Bolt."²⁷ Bolt was seventeen when he was killed.

While the Baccus herders remained in jail, on February 18 Clark led a posse toward the James River where he had heard of cattle being gathered. Among his posse were brand inspector Daniel Hoerster, Tom Gamel, and Kale Hall, friend and ally of Clark and a mob member.²⁸ The expedition proved futile. As they returned, Clark called Gamel aside and

suggested that they hang the jailed men. Gamel refused, and from Mason prudently rode on to the home of his father-in-law Bob Caveness.



Daniel and Wilhelmina (Mina) Hoerster c. 1872. *Courtesy Mason County Historical Commission.*

About eight o'clock that evening, Kale Hall arrived at the Caveness home with the news "that a mob had taken the prisoners out of jail."²⁹ Hall told Gamel he was wanted in Mason. Gamel refused to go, and Hall returned to town.

Sometime after ten o'clock—two hours after Hall tried to fetch Gamel—a mob burst into the home of Deputy Sheriff John Wohrle, tied him to a chair and demanded the jailhouse keys. Wohrle's wife, pregnant at the time, went into hysterics and began screaming. One of those bravos snarled, "Hit her in the mouth and she'll shut up."³⁰ Despite being tortured, Wohrle refused to hand over the keys. The mob then stormed the jail and hauled the prisoners down the road toward Fredericksburg.

Clark, evidently having had a change of heart or trying to cover his trail, led a posse in pursuit of the lynch mob. Clark, the only mounted man in the group, hurried them along until they sighted the band and opened fire. The panicked mob members began shooting their prisoners and fled. Wiggins was shot in the head. Johnson, whom the mob had put on a horse to await the noose, leaped from his mount and escaped in the darkness. The Baccus cousins were already dead, but the posse arrived in time to save the dangling Tom Turley.³¹ Wiggins died on

the morning of the nineteenth.³²

San Antonio *Herald*, 1st: We see it stated in an exchange that five men were recently hung at Fort Mason. We are able, thanks to a gentleman who was present, to define the deliberations that took place under the spreading branches of a live oak a little more definitely. Some unknown parties (many citizens probably) seized upon the five men who were suspected of being horse thieves, and succeeded in elevating three of the five, when the sheriff put in an appearance. "Many citizens" thought it best to postpone the obsequies of the rest, and withdrew hastily, after wounding one of the accused, who was waiting for his turn to be an angel. The gentlemen in the tree were cut down, and one of them revived, but the other two were as dead as the International compromise bill. So instead of five men being hung, only two were hung, and one was shot. For the sake of the reputation of Mason as a law abiding community we hope this correction will be made.³³

Kale Hall's role is significant. That he served as a posseman is undisputed, but the fact that the clairvoyant Hall was sent to get Gamel two hours before the lynching indicates that Gamel was marked for death and Hall was a member of the mob. Considering Hall's career, he was far more a candidate to receive vigilante justice than administer it.

Born June 15 (or 16), 1849, in Graves County, Kentucky, to Caleb and Lucy Hall, Caleb "Kale" Hall was a hardened cattle thief and outlaw at the time of the feud. When he arrived in Texas is uncertain, but in March 1871 he was arrested in Harris County for gambling.³⁴ Two months later he was rounded up following an attack on a Dr. Shelbourne but "proving an alibi he was released."³⁵ The 1878 *Fugitives from Justice* indicates that he was wanted for cattle theft in Kinney County.³⁶ Closer to Mason he was charged with assault with attempt to kill.³⁷ He later fled Texas to New Mexico, where he rode with John Selman's gang of thieves, killers, and rapists during the Lincoln County War under the alias Sam Collins.³⁸

Tom Gamel was nobody's fool. Born November 28, 1846, to William and Catherine (Hixie) Gamel in Alabama, he had reached Texas with his family by 1850. In 1856 they settled in Legion Valley, later moving to Mason. During the Civil War he served in Company 1 of the Third Frontier Battalion.³⁹ He also served in the state police, enlisting May 10, 1871.⁴⁰ A veteran of the frontier, he correctly interpreted Hall's actions as a ploy have him killed and prevent him from revealing Clark's role in the mob. He clearly understood that his life was in danger and hastily gathered allies to hunt those hunting him.

John Ringo probably learned of the lynching and its subsequent events from Charley Johnson. Johnson was kin to Green Caudle. Given Ringo's distrust of vigilante justice, hearing of the killings from a near victim would put him squarely against mob law.

While Gamel gathered allies, the next tragedy of the Hoo Doo War unfolded. Helene Wohrle, John Wohrle's wife, suffered a miscarriage on February 25. "Poor Mrs. Wordly [*sic*] had a miscarriage today the result of her fright the other night."⁴¹ The tragic death of the baby must be charged to the mob although their apologists generally disregard the infant's death. This discredits local tradition that Wohrle knew of the planned lynching beforehand. Wohrle would hardly have staged such a scene in his own home.⁴²

The vigilantes struck again before the month was over. On March 1 Texas Ranger Dan Roberts reported, "The mob has been operating some in Llano County lately. Killed one man named Wages—ordered several men to leave the county. As yet they've harmed no good man."⁴³ The victim was William Wages, who had been charged the previous fall with killing cattle in Mason County.⁴⁴ Whether Roberts believed what he wrote is irrelevant. His lack of action could only be interpreted as official tolerance of lynch law. Company D would be tested

in the fires of the Hoo Doo War and found wanting. Had Roberts moved to suppress the mob, the vigilantes could possibly have been broken and the lives of dozens changed for the better. He did not, and the violence continued until the early 1900s. The mob, or, in this case, mobs, were encouraged.

In his memoirs, admitted mob member Miles Barler, a Llano County resident, recalled that the mob had formed a group to deal with cattle thieves there. Barler charged A. G. Roberts as the leader of the outlaws.⁴⁵ More realistically, the Llano mob was not simply dealing with cattle thieves but waging a war to control the county's rangeland and cattle.

Tom Turley never stood trial. On March 6 Lucia Holmes reported a rumor circulated in Mason that the mob intended to return and finish what they had started. The following day she wrote, "Tom Gurley [*sic*] and Caleb Hall escaped out of jail this afternoon by digging through the partition into next cell."⁴⁶ That Hall was in jail less than a month following the lynching is curious. That he felt the need to escape the conveniently unguarded jail raises further questions.

The mob did not materialize in Mason, but they were on the move. A week later they attempted to lynch Al Baird, another local cattleman who had perhaps refused to ally himself with them. "News came in that a party of armed [men] went to Al Beard [*sic*] ranch after him."⁴⁷ Baird escaped, but shortly after this a man named John Kelley (or Kelly) was hung in Llano County.⁴⁸ Even to the untrained eye, the situation was rapidly deteriorating. Lacking support from the state government, the area's cattlemen resolved to take matters into their own hands.

Allied with Tom Gamel, thirty-six-year-old Rufus Winn headed the next action. John Ringo was not with this group as postulated in 1996.⁴⁹ "Mr. Beard [*sic*] and Mr. [Wilson] Hey came in and Hal [Henry M. Holmes] made out a paper for men to sign for the preservation of law and order in the county. Tom Gamel and R. Winn brought in ever so many men with him. They camped out tonight. Nobody knows what they are for."⁵⁰ Lucia Holmes did not have all the facts, for one man knew, or suspected, their purpose. Following the observation of Ecclesiastes that the guilty flee where no man pursues, Sheriff Clark fled town the following day. There is no hint that Gamel threatened violence to Clark or anyone else. Clark did not return until the twenty-second.⁵¹ Henry Holmes later wrote that "the sheriff returned to the town, followed by sixty-two men, mounted and armed, and it was at once remarked that every one of the gentlemen following him were Germans, not one American amongst them. The town was held by this party in a kind of semi-military manner for the remainder of the week." Both groups behaved admirably and agreed that there "should be no more mobs or hanging."⁵² On the twenty-seventh both forces left Mason. Then, reports Lucia Holmes, the "Rangers came in to protect Clark."⁵³

Clark's choice of allies reveals much about the Mason mob's composition. Clark openly sided with the Germans, the only group within the county still actively supporting him. He had been publicly shamed by the threat to his authority, and had fled town in anticipation of retribution. Most Mason County residents were convinced that a county war had narrowly been avoided. Regardless, with the sheriff actively supporting them and state officials seemingly oblivious to their activities, the mob remained undeterred.

Lieutenant Dan Roberts and Company D remained in Mason for the rest of the month. On

April 1 Roberts reported everything was “quiet in regard to the Mason trouble.”⁵⁴ Three days later he left Mason, confident that disaster had been avoided. It was premature. On April 8 a notice appeared in the courthouse ominously warning people “not to drive any cattle but their own.”⁵⁵

While ranchers with cattle interests in Mason County eyed each other warily, John Ringo had problems of his own. On April 5 the grand jury in Burnet indicted him for disturbance of the peace.⁵⁶ Nine days later a warrant was issued for his arrest.⁵⁷ Witnesses in the case were Thomas and “N. (?) W. Harris.” The latter may have been one George Washington Harris, a blacksmith, who had arrived in Burnet in 1858.

April was quiet. Men went about their business, among them John Clark, whose duties as county tax collector included resolving a tax dispute involving Tim Williamson, the foreman of Karl Lehmberg’s Llano County ranch and witness against Clark in the previous year’s arrests.

Timothy P. Williamson was born at Charlotte, North Carolina, on December 23, 1842.⁵⁸ He served during the Civil War, initially enlisting in Captain Seth Mabry’s company on April 14, 1862. He was discharged April 29, 1865.⁵⁹ Williamson married Mary Elizabeth Johnson, a cousin of Charley Johnson, and the couple had five children. Sometime after 1870 they moved to Loyal Valley. Tim Williamson had not been charged with any crime during his life until he reached Mason County.

The cause of Williamson’s tax concern is readily apparent. In 1875 he was assessed for thirty acres of land valued at \$30, seven horses at \$245, 220 cattle at \$1,000, miscellaneous property valued at \$60, and a single town lot assessed at \$1,200.⁶⁰ Although his lot had only a private dwelling, it was assessed \$200 higher than John O. Meusebach’s store.

Clark went to Loyal Valley to confer with Williamson. “Williamson was not at home and Clark proceeded to abuse Williamson’s wife,” according to Gamel. When Williamson learned of the incident he rode to Mason and challenged Clark to fight. Clark refused.⁶¹

Again John Clark was subjected to public humiliation. This, following so closely on the heels of a near civil war in Mason, was unbearable, and Clark began to plot his revenge. His first step was to approach Daniel Hoerster, Williamson’s bondsman. The *Austin Daily Statesman* reported, “A Mr. Tim Williamson, a stock man living in Mason, was under a heavy bond for his appearance at Mason court. Sometime in May he was met by Mr. Herster [*sic*], one of his bondsmen, and Wohrlie [*sic*], deputy sheriff of Mason county, and was surrendered by Herster to Wohrlie.”⁶²

Wohrle arrested Williamson at Karl Lehmberg’s ranch in Llano County on May 13. Lehmberg offered to post bond, a common practice at the time, but Wohrle refused despite the rancher’s wealth and standing in the community. Lehmberg decided to accompany the men to Mason and post bond there.⁶³

Three miles west of Castell they were ambushed by a mob of about a dozen men. Williamson begged Wohrle to let him run for his life. In response, Wohrle drew his pistol and killed Williamson’s horse. The hapless rancher reportedly recognized at least one of his assailants, Peter Bader from Llano County, and pleaded for his life. Bader killed him.⁶⁴

Williamson’s murder sparked great excitement in Mason. Lehmberg had escaped and spread the story. Henry M. Holmes prepared a petition asking the governor to send help to put down

the mob.⁶⁵ Like a prior petition, it went unanswered and it appeared that once again Clark and the mob had escaped punishment. They may have thought it was the perfect murder even though they left a witness. Other forces were at work, forces of which Clark and his allies had no concept. In the violence and terror that followed they would discover that it is one thing to unleash terror and another thing entirely to stop it.

They had killed the wrong man.

“Hell has broke loose up here”

IF EVER A MAN WAS BORN TO THE FEUD, it was Scott Cooley. Seemingly from nowhere Cooley looms so large on the Mason County scene that others shrink in comparison. His name became synonymous with terror.

William Scott Cooley was born in Izard County, Arkansas, to Matthias and Martha Whitney Cooley in 1855. By 1860 the family had settled in Jack County, Texas.¹ The Cooley boys grew up tough, hard men. Indian raids were a way of life and newspapers regularly reported killings and thefts by the raiders. The Cooleys taught the raiders about fear. The February 10, 1872, *Dallas Herald* reports “On Saturday the 20th, three young men, Cooley by name, living on Picket’s ranche in White prairie, came upon four Indians, and killed two of the four, one of whom they scalped, while the other dead Indian was carried away by his companions.”² Three months later the Cooleys again saw action. The *Galveston Christian Advocate* informed its readers, “We learn from the Texas exchanges that the Indians made a raid on Wise county, but the sheriff and the Cooley [*sic*] boys got after them and killed them all.”³

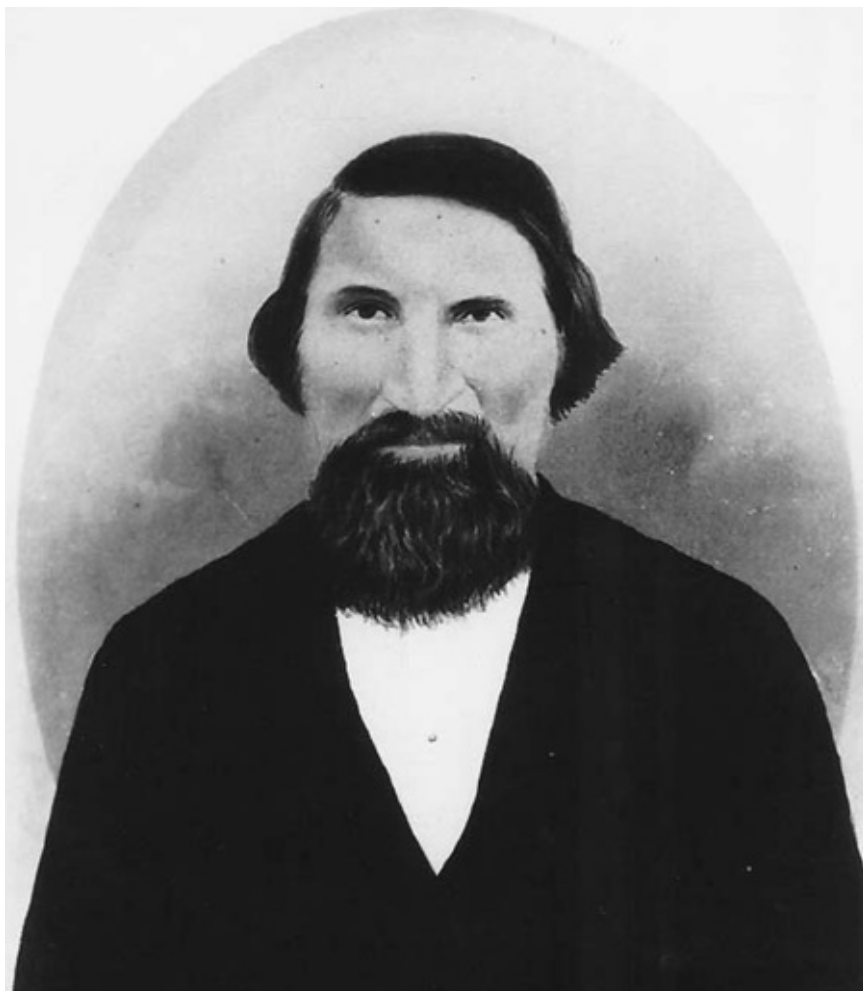
Indians were not the only enemies they faced. In 1870 Joseph Horton shot Matthias Cooley to death in a dispute. The following day the Cooley brothers killed Horton in revenge.⁴ None of them was brought to trial.

Scott Cooley met Tim Williamson around 1872, hiring on as a drover. James B. Gillett, who served with Cooley in the Rangers, recalled that the pair had made two drives to Kansas.⁵ The drives must have been in 1872 and 1873, for on May 2, 1874, Cooley enlisted in Company D of the Rangers.⁶ During his enlistment he acquired a further reputation for courage, and his instincts as a savage feudist were honed. Reporting on a fight between Comanches and Company D on November 21, 1874, the *Statesman* observed, “The boys brought some fresh scalps with them, and they report that Scott Cooley, who was fired at and run into camp, not only cut a wounded Indian’s throat, but stripped a large piece of skin from his back, saying that he would make a quirt out of it.”⁷ Cooley served as a corporal until August 15 when he resigned the position, choosing instead to remain on the force as a private.⁸ Cooley received his discharge on December 2, 1874, and rented a farm in Menard County.

Cooley’s involvement in the feud was a matter simply of personal vengeance. Tom Gamel recalled, “It seemed that Cooley’s only motive was to find the man or men responsible for Williamson’s death—he did not take sides with either element.”⁹ This was confirmed in 1875. “The day news of Williamson’s murder came to the Ranger camp, to which force Cooley at one time belonged, he sat down and cried with grief for the loss of one who he said was his best friend in the world, and declared then that he would have revenge.”¹⁰ “If the law was not going

to act, Cooley would take matters into his own hands.”¹¹ Given his close ties to the Rangers during 1874 and 1875, the charge that he was an outlaw leader during this time is both unfounded and unsupportable.¹²

District court began July 12, 1875, and a number of cases were heard, among them that of Charley Johnson, who had surrendered to Dan Robert’s Rangers. He was freed, a clear indication that the case against the Baccus herders was untenable. No indictments were found in the lynching case or the Bolt murder. No one was indicted for the Williamson murder. “No effort whatever so far as is known was made by the authorities to endeavor to discover the perpetrators of this outrage further than to hold a coroner’s inquest over the remains.”¹³



Henry Doell. *Courtesy Mason County Historical Commission.*

While Cooley listened in Mason, John Ringo made his next appearance in the official records. On July 9 he was arrested in Burnet on the charge of disturbing the peace the previous December. Possibly he surrendered himself, since M. B. Thomas and John W. Calvert immediately posted bond for \$200. The case was continued.¹⁴

Both Thomas and Calvert were among Burnet’s finest. Calvert’s involvement demonstrates that people in Burnet thought well of John Ringo. The Calverts had come to Burnet in the 1850s and by 1870 Hugh Hudson Calvert, John’s father, was running the Calvert House a block south of the courthouse.¹⁵ John Wardlow Calvert was born September 17, 1848. He married Mary

Jane Carruth in Burnet on January 17, 1866.

In the early morning of July 21, Henry Doell was killed while on a cow hunt with Fritz Kothmann, Al and John Lindsay, and August Keller. About two o'clock in the morning a rifle shot struck him while he was sleeping in camp. The bullet passed through Doell and hit August Keller in the leg. Doell died hours later. Henry Holmes provided the best account of Doell's death: "They were camped on high open ground, no cover for any lurking foe, an impossibility for any one to distinguish between forms laying on the ground unless they had followed the party up, and seen where they slept, which it would have been impossible to do undiscovered, and further their horses stolen and driven out of the country and not heard of since and no tracks but those of moccasins."

The first version of the shooting to appear in print blamed it on outlaws disguised as Indians and "thought to belong to 'Rance and Co.'s' band of freebooters."¹⁶ Rance was Kimble County rancher Rance Moore, and it is hardly surprising that Clark sought to cast the blame on a nonresident cattleman. Some credibility was lent to Clark's accusations since Doell was one of the posse that arrested M. B. Thomas and his men the previous year. At the time it was viewed as a killing in the feud.

Doell knew a number of people with a motive to kill him, at least on paper. In 1944 one of Doell's sons informed C. L. Sonnichsen that after the mob had murdered Williamson, Doell had openly questioned the murder. He also informed Sonnichsen of a local story that Alf Gamel killed his father. Others theorize that Cooley killed Doell. Local tradition, however, says the intended target was Fritz Kothmann, a suspected mob leader.

Doell's statement to Sonnichsen is not in accord with his testimony in the Indian Depredation Claim of John H. Brite. On direct questioning regarding his father's death, Doell responded, "It is supposed, I am told, that the Indians killed him at the time."¹⁷



George W. Gladden. *Courtesy author's collection.*

At the same time, John Ringo met with George Gladden. On July 20, 1875, he and Gladden checked into the Nimitz Hotel in Fredericksburg. The hotel register indicates that they were given room 15. Both men apparently went north to Llano County. Ringo returned alone to the Nimitz Hotel on the twenty-third, registering as being from Llano.¹⁸

Meanwhile Scott Cooley prepared to exact justice for the murder of Tim Williamson. Cooley observed the hearings and probably interviewed Karl Lehmberg. Lehmberg could identify the killers, and if he believed Cooley was a Ranger, would have been willing to talk. In Mason, Cooley had local gunsmith J. P. Miller service his pistol.¹⁹ Then he began to stalk John Wohrle. He found him on August 10.

Wohrle, Charles "Doc" Harcourt, and a third man were digging a well.²⁰ Sometime between three and four o'clock in the afternoon Cooley rode up and engaged them in conversation. After a time, Harcourt climbed into the bucket and his coworkers began winching him down the well. As they did, Cooley suddenly demanded, "Wohrle, why did you kill Williamson?"

"Because I had to," was Wohrle's startled reply.

Cooley drew and fired. The bullet struck Wohrle in the back of the head, killing him instantly. As Wohrle collapsed, the other man released the winch and ran. Harcourt fell to the bottom of the well but survived. Cooley then scalped Wohrle and fled.

The killing shocked Mason but had little effect on the mob, who believed they were above the law. In a typical press release the mob again took the opportunity to accuse nonresident cattlemen of the crime.

HORRIBLE MURDER AT MASON.—From the [Fredericksburg] Freie Presse of the 17th inst, we translate the following:

“On the 10th of August, during the afternoon, Mr. John Wohrly, a quiet respectable citizen and former Deputy Sheriff, was assisting a man by the name of Harcut in digging a well when a young man of about twenty-four years of age, rode up and began conversing with Wohrly in the most friendly manner, stating among other things that he was looking for two horses. He asked Wohrly for a piece of leather with which to fasten his gun to his saddle, which request was complied with. While the villain was apparently fixing the leather to the saddle, Wohrly and another man who was present, began hauling Harcutt up from the bottom of the well. While they were thus engaged the stranger took advantage of the opportunity to shoot Wohrly through in the back of the head, the ball coming out near his nose. Wohrly fell dead, his companion, being without arms, fled, and Harcutt fell to the bottom of the well, a distance of forty feet, where he remained senseless.

The murderer then fired six shots into the body of Wohrly, stabbed it in four places with his knife, and finally took his scalp, whereupon the fiend mounted his horse and rode off.

It is probable that the murderer will evade all earthly punishment as he is evidently the paid assassin of men who will back him up.²¹

In terms of strategy, Cooley had chosen his first target perfectly. No one had anticipated an avenging fury, and Cooley had deliberately killed the most likely target for vengeance. That Wohrle had killed Williamson’s horse was the worst-kept secret of the feud. The evidence suggests Wohrle acted under duress, perhaps intimidated by the mob. Sometime between Williamson’s murder and August he resigned as deputy sheriff. That act of contrition did not save him, but for the mob it was not a major blow. They remained confident that their identities were secret. When Cooley killed Karl Bader on August 19, however, it caught them unprepared.²²

Karl “Charley” Bader, a younger brother of Peter Bader, was born June 4, 1853, to Gottfried and Christina Bader. In yet another example of the close family ties that exacerbated the feud, his wife was Katherine Kothmann, the widowed sister of Daniel Hoerster. Gamel believed that Cooley intended to kill Peter Bader but got Karl by mistake and charged that John Baird, Scott Cooley, Charles Johnson, and George Gladden raided the Bader home hunting Peter Bader but killed Karl, who was cutting top fodder, by mistake.²³ One writer cites the *Austin Statesman* of October 17, 1875, and *San Antonio Herald* of October 6, 1875, as evidence that John Ringo was involved. Neither paper, however, mentions him.²⁴ The *Statesman* reported: “Then came the murder of Charley Bader by some of Cooley’s party, supposed by George Gladden and Moses Beard [*sic*].” The *Herald* does not mention Karl Bader at all. No contemporary source located suggests Ringo’s involvement. One historian cites a Fredericksburg paper claiming two men killed Bader while he was traveling on a road.²⁵ Given the sensational reports flowing from Mason during this time, the article is suspect. Contemporary evidence strongly suggests only Cooley was involved in Bader’s death.²⁶

Ringo was not in Mason County at the time. During August, John Ringo was frequently in Fredericksburg in Gillespie County. Ringo’s case came to trial on August 5 and he failed to appear.²⁷ Ringo was in Fredericksburg. On August 6 he registered at the Nimitz Hotel. He was back on August 9. Two days later M. B. Thomas registered. On August 25 Ringo registered with Joe Olney, W. B. Nichols, and A. E. Baugh, who gave his address as Fort Clark.²⁸

Bader’s death panicked the Hoo Doos. It was one thing to kill helpless men, and another to

be hunted down and killed. The press was fully aroused to the bloody situation. "In Mason county bloodthirsty gangs of murderers ride triumphantly over the rights of law abiding citizens."²⁹ The quest for revenge had begun. On September 2 Joseph Miller was killed under mysterious circumstances.³⁰

The wavering allegiance of his followers boded ill for Clark, himself a fugitive from justice. "His (Dreux's) statement that the Sheriff was out of town 10 or 15 miles is true, and generally is, as his usefulness has lately been sadly interfered with by a visit from the Sheriff of Llano County who wants him for over zealously discharging his duty, his friends say, the indictments call it 'Robbery and False Imprisonment.'"³¹ Something had to be done.

Apologists for John Clark charge that Moses Baird and George Gladden killed Karl Bader, and perhaps Clark honestly believed this. If so his failure to investigate the matter fully is indicative of culpable negligence bordering on malfeasance. Moses Baird was not in Mason County at all during the month of August.

S. W. Covington claimed that Moses Baird had driven off ten head of his cattle on March 30, 1875. Baird was indicted on April 26, the same day he was indicted for disturbing the peace.³² According to the indictment, Baird and Joe Haden arrived uninvited at a party on March 31 and engaged in "loud and boisterous talking."³³ On August 4, Baird was in Burnet to attend court on these charges when he was confronted by Rufus Hoover and struck Hoover with his pistol. He was charged with aggravated assault and battery.³⁴ Baird was still in town on August 6 when the charge of disturbing the peace was dismissed. The same day he was brought to trial on the cattle theft charge. A jury found him not guilty.³⁵ While his whereabouts between August 7 and August 16 are unknown, he was definitely in Burnet County on August 17 when the arrest warrant in the Rufus Hoover case was issued and served.³⁶ Baird was placed in the county jail until his bond was accepted on August 28, nine days after Bader's murder.³⁷

The facts did not deter Clark. Allegations of Baird's involvement later appeared in newspapers, but the charges were never made in court. Instead he garrisoned Hedwig's Hill, a small town on the direct route from Loyal Valley to Mason. Gamel reports that Dan Hoerster and Clark paid Jim Chaney \$50 to ride to Loyal Valley and get Moses Baird and Gladden to come to Mason.³⁸ Clark's confidence that they would come clearly indicates that they had no reason not to.

Clark knew Baird and Gladden were likely to halt at Keller's store. His lethal ambush was ready for them, and "when they got pretty close to the store, Sheriff Clark saw that they were Mose Beard and George Gladden . . . the Sheriff stepped out on the porch with his rifle in hand, and the firing commenced."³⁹ Gamel stated: "Clark and Hoerster, with about sixty men, who were awaiting them, opened fire on the two."⁴⁰

Baird was hit hard and could not remount his terrified horse. Rather than abandon his friend, Gladden stopped to aid him. In a supreme act of courage, he managed to help Baird onto his calmer mount even as bullets slammed into his own body. With Baird safely mounted, Gladden swung up behind him and fled. Behind them Clark's little army scrambled for their mounts.

At Beaver Creek, Gladden fell from the saddle. Baird managed to ride farther along the creek before he fell. The posse was moments behind. When they reached Gladden one of the

men drew his pistol to finish him off. Charlie Keller, son of the storeowner, leveled his pistol on the would-be killer and swore he would kill the first man to shoot Gladden. It was a courageous move by Keller. No one fired. Moses Baird was less fortunate. Peter Bader overtook and unceremoniously killed him. Seeing a gold ring Baird had, Bader climbed down and cut off the finger to claim his bloody trophy.⁴¹



Original headstone of Moses Baird. Baird's death drew John Ringo into the feud. *Courtesy author's collection.*

The mob swiftly realized the shootings at Hedwig's Hill were another major blunder by Clark. Baird was extremely popular in the Hill Country. "A letter from Fredericksburg dated Sept. 8th, has been received in this city, and conveys the following startling news: 'H-ll has broke loose up here. Mose Beard [sic] was killed yesterday; Geo. Gladden is badly wounded, but there is some hope of his getting well. He is shot through the arm, and in the face. All this happened at Keller's store on the Llano.' We fear this is but the beginning of a bloody solution of the difficulties about stock that have become so serious of late."⁴²

In Mason, attorney Henry M. Holmes penned yet another letter to Governor Richard Coke:

Sir

I have the honor to call your attention to the fact that on Sunday the 6th inst. two more men viz Mose Beard and G. W. Gladden were shot in this county. Beard was killed. Gladden still lives. The stories of the killing are dramatically opposite and I certainly cannot inform you as to whom the cause most attaches. The men shot were alone and were killed by a large number of Germans with Mr. Jn. Clark, Sheriff of the county at their head.

The Germans claim that Beard and Gladden began the fight firing about fifty shots at ten or twelve paces from Mr. Clark. No one was hurt however except the two men Beard and Gladden.

Mr. Beard is a man of large connexions [sic] in Burnet county and if something is not done a civil war will be inaugurated

The County authorities are completely paralyzed and can do nothing—I write this so that your Excellency may know the state of affairs and if it is found impossible to order troops here some suggestion might be made by your Excellency for our guidance.

Some short time ago a meeting was held and largely attended, which requested the Sheriff and other County officials to resign. The sheriff has not done so but still is leader of a band composed exclusively of Germans. He is a fugitive from justice there being five indictments against him in Llano County for Robbery and false imprisonment—he cannot be arrested with the force at the disposal of the justices and now holds the County in awe with some fifty men at Keller’s, the scene of Mondays killing about eight miles from here. The lives of all those who do not belong to the mob are in danger and quiet can hardly be restored until some steps are taken to bring the perpetrators of the late murders (10) to justice and this cannot be done in this county by any jury grand or petit summoned from the vicinity.

The authority of the law is apparently gone here, and in my view only a Commissioner with your Excellency’s authority backed by a strong force of troops can restore it.⁴³

Even as inept a bureaucrat as John Clark realized that the public would view his assertion that two men had attacked sixty and fired fifty unanswered shots with skepticism if not outright disbelief. In an attempt to shore up his story he then claimed that the men were resisting arrest, a claim equally false.⁴⁴ Had either of the men been wanted on criminal charges, Clark would have arrested Gladden, even if he was dying, rather than dispatching him without guard to Loyal Valley for medical treatment.

The rationale for the shootings is obscure. The most likely theory is that the target was not Moses Baird but Gladden. Had they killed Gladden, the case against Clark and his posse would have collapsed. Baird was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.⁴⁵

Whatever the truth of it, Clark’s force made two major blunders. They had permitted Gladden to survive the ambush, probably believing he was dying. Worse, they had killed Moses Baird. In later years, Mason residents recalled that killing Baird was the most foolish thing the mob could have done. “Men came from as far away as San Antonio to avenge him.”⁴⁶

Fearing an attack, Clark continued to garrison Hedwig’s Hill with his little army. Moses Baird’s killing marked Ringo’s entry into the feud despite unsubstantiated claims that Ringo became involved in “a range war between German and American families.”⁴⁷ By the time Ringo became involved, the range war had been engulfed in the terrifying quest for revenge.

News of Baird’s killing reached Burnet County quickly. Bill Faris stated, “They were so upset by the news that they didn’t eat before they left [to bring Baird’s body home]. When they arrived they found Mose so ripe that they couldn’t eat on the way back. Vultures followed the wagon all the way back to Burnet.”⁴⁸ Sam Tanner told his family he drove the wagon to Mason County with his rifle across his lap fully expecting to be shot at any moment.⁴⁹ The group was a large one. Accompanying John Baird were Bill Faris, Sam Tanner, John Olney, John Ringo, and others.⁵⁰

Sensing allies, Scott Cooley seized the moment to rendezvous with Baird at Loyal Valley. The fiery ex-ranger lost no time allying himself to the group. Clark, wary of the force gathered within striking distance of Mason, sent Tom Gamel to meet with the Baird party at Loyal Valley.⁵¹ On the tenth, Gamel and Deputy Sheriff James Baird visited Gladden’s home. There they found Cooley, Baird, and “a fellow by the name of Ringoe [sic] and Williams at the house.”⁵² Cooley, having found willing allies, was in high spirits and bought a round of drinks at the saloon.

Gamel and Baird returned to Hedwig’s Hill where Clark waited. Before they left, Dan Hoerster told Gamel to tell Cooley “the next time we meet one of us is going to die.”⁵³ The *San Antonio Herald* reported, “After the killing, Mr. Keller’s house was garrisoned for a couple of

days, by about 50 men, who were apprehensive that an attack would be made by some parties from Loyal Valley. Mr. John Beard, however, took his brother's body back to Burnet quietly and peaceably."⁵⁴ In Burnet a pregnant Laura Olney apparently went into shock at the sight of Moses's body. On October 7, she gave birth to a son, Samuel Tanner Olney. The child died the same day.⁵⁵

In Austin, Governor Richard Coke belatedly responded to the pleas from Mason. For John Ringo it was clear that the law had failed. Whatever justice was to be would be in the hands of Baird's friends and family.

In Mason, Clark and his allies waited for some kind of reaction. They would not wait long. Each man acted in his own way and time. Ecclesiastes teaches that there is a time for all things. The time to kill had arrived.

“alias Long John”

ON SEPTEMBER 25, 1875, Ringo, Cooley, and six or eight others brazenly rode into Mason. Ringo and a man identified as Williams, probably Jim Williams, Bill Redding’s brother-in-law, split off from the main group.¹ The pair rode to Jim Chaney’s home along Comanche Creek. Ringo and Williams hailed the house, and Chaney emerged, inviting them in for breakfast. “Chaney asked Ringoe and Williams down and they stepped upon the porch and washed their faces. Chaney washed and was drying his face and while he had his face covered with the towel, Ringoe and Williams shot him down and rode back to where their friends were awaiting them.”²

The men then rode to David Doole’s store and ordered him to come out. Doole refused and immediately grabbed his gun, shouting, “Either get down and come in or ride on.” The men went to Lace Bridges’ hotel where they met District Clerk Wilson Hey. Hey invited the men to have breakfast. Cooley answered, “You go inside and tell Mrs. Bridges there is some fresh meat up the creek.” The men ate breakfast at Bridges’ with their guns across their laps before leaving Mason.³

This raid stunned Mason, and on September 29 the mob learned how truly vulnerable they were. While a confederate named Booker Sweeney held their mounts, Cooley, Baird, and George Gladden ambushed Dan Hoerster along with his brother-in-law Peter Jordan and Henry Pluenneke in Mason.⁴ A blast from Baird’s shotgun killed Hoerster instantly. Jordan and Pluenneke narrowly escaped. The killers made good their escape, taking with them Bill Coke who may have been involved in the shooting.

Little is known about Bill Coke. He was born around 1845. On September 12, 1870 he had enlisted in Company 1 of the Frontier Forces under James M. Hunter. Coke served until January 24, 1871. Coke had no obvious connection to either Baird or Cooley, but he did to the Gamels. The 1870 Census describes him as a laborer living in the household of John W. Gamel, one of Tom Gamel’s brothers.⁵

Ironically, John B. Jones arrived in Mason County the day Hoerster was killed but was diverted to Loyal Valley. This may account for the baseless charge that Loyal Valley was “a known hangout for the lower elements of Texas society,” flatly denied by both the Mason County Historical Commission and the Mason County Historical Society.⁶ At Hedwig’s Hill, Jones rode into another Clark ambush. Fortunately no one was hurt.⁷

Fear seized Mason County. Lucia Holmes recorded, “Oh the worry of these dreadful times.”⁸ The *Austin Statesman* quipped, “The *Cuero Star* should proclaim it, and the people of Mason never forget that few people of the better class care to emigrate to a country where they think it necessary to wear a six-shooter at their side, a bowie knife in their boot, and keep an

eye over both shoulders to insure safety.”⁹

With Rangers swarming over Mason County, Baird withdrew to the relative safety of Burnet and Llano counties. Bill Coke was captured by a posse and summarily killed, his body hidden in an unmarked grave.¹⁰ Jeff Ake, an early-day gunfighter, encountered some of Baird’s fighters hiding on Table Mountain. “When I come to the gap on the way to the mesa—there was a kind of mesa inside the rim—a feller throwed down on me, till he knowed who I was. The Ringo-Gladden crowd was in there, living on beef and roasting ears.”¹¹

They did not remain hidden long, although for one it would have been better if he had. On October 1, 1875, Ben Faris was killed in a gunfight although details are lacking.¹² At the end of November, Ringo reportedly had a fight with the Texas Rangers. “For some time past a party of five men have been banded together and encamped in the mountains, fifteen miles southwest of Mason, making a business of not only stealing cattle, but actually killing them for their hides. Warrants for their arrest have been out for some time, but they defied civil authorities. Lieut. Long, of the Rangers, and a squad of his men recently surprised the outlaws in their camp and captured them. The rangers also captured a party under Scott Cooley, wounding that noted leader.”¹³

A correspondent signing himself Alazan added details from the *Freie Presse*: “At last the Rangers appeared to be in earnest, as we hear that on last Saturday they came upon Scott Cooley and John Ringgold. Cooley is reported to be wounded and Ringgold a prisoner.”¹⁴ The report was wrong. Ira Long’s Company A captured some cattle thieves on November 3 but failed to locate any Baird allies.¹⁵ It was hardly surprising since two Baird partisans, Allen Tanner and James Henry Thomas, a brother of M. B. Thomas, were members of Company A.

Baird’s strong support in Burnet and Llano counties made Cooley careless. On December 27, Sheriff John Clymer and Deputy J. J. Strickland arrested Cooley and Ringo. Probably they were after Ringo for the charge of disturbing the peace, but one or both of the men threatened them.¹⁶ Their arrest aroused a hornet’s nest of open support for the feudists. An officer named Johnson “reports a horrible state of affairs” in Burnet. When Johnson arrived “there about twenty men were dashing about the town threatening to break open the jail, which was being guarded by fifty or more men, and liberating the prisoners.” The sheriff was “in constant expectation of an attack.” After his prisoner was received, Johnson started back, “meeting many armed men along the road.”¹⁷

Fearing an attempt to liberate the prisoners, Strickland and a dozen guards took them to Austin, arriving on January 2, 1876.

COOLEY AND RINGGOLD—On Sunday morning the STATESMAN announced that Scott Cooley and John Ringgold, two of the Mason county desperadoes, had been arrested and placed in the Burnet jail, which was under a heavy guard to prevent the release of the prisoners by an armed body of men that were dashing about the town. On Sunday deputy sheriff Strickland, accompanied by about ten or twelve men, brought the prisoners to this city for safe keeping until the meeting of the Burnet district court on the fourth Monday in this month. Arriving in the city the whole party stopped at Salge’s snack house for lunch, and while there a large concourse of people gathered to see the two men who have in the past few months, with others, been “on the rampage” in the counties of Mason and Burnet. The prisoners were apparently cool and reserved, and chatted as freely as any of the guard, and each recognized a person or two in the crowd. Cooley, who is said to have been a very quiet man until about a year ago, is a short solid man, about twenty-eight years old, and looks like he might have some Cherokee blood in him. He is charged with having killed deputy sheriff John A. Whorlie of Mason county, and it is said that after killing him he also took his scalp off. Ringgold, who is taller and perhaps older than Cooley, is said to have taken an active part in the Mason county war, and he and Cooley are charged with having threatened the lives of Sheriff Clymer, of

Mason [sic], and his deputy, Strickland. The prisoners are now in the Travis county jail, and the guard left for home yesterday.¹⁸

While Cooley and Ringo languished in jail, Baird forces continued to hunt Peter Bader. Bader, known killer for the mob, had been abandoned by them. Bader was “pretty rough and ready, given to noisy demonstrations and full of bluster, but quite ready to make good his boasts.”¹⁹ Before the feud, Bader, an apprentice blacksmith, had been charged in Kerr County with malicious mischief for shooting a hog in October 1870. He was cleared because they could not prove he intended to harm the hog’s owner.²⁰ Bader had no stock at this time, but in 1875 he owned 200 head of cattle.²¹ One indication of how he might have obtained them is a charge of hog theft in Llano County in October 1875.²² Bader planned to flee Texas, but he waited too long. Baird and Gladden caught him on January 13, 1876. The *Galveston Daily News* mistakenly identified Peter Bader as “Bourbon.” “The Cooley party in the great vendetta in this county are charged with another murder. Report says that one day last week a foreigner by the name of Bourbon was riding along the public road when he was attacked by a party of men and shot. The party then seeing some men approaching and supposing them to be friends of their victim, told them to take up the man and take care of his valuables, as they (the assassins) did not want money but his life. Bourbon had \$400 and a gold watch when shot.”²³

In late January, Cooley was returned to Burnet. Deputies Henry Stokes and Fred Peck stated “they saw no signs of resistance or of an attempt being made to release the prisoner.”²⁴

On February 1, Ringo and Cooley were indicted for “Seriously threatening to take the life of a human being.”²⁵ The following day Ringo was in court to answer the disturbing the peace charge. He pleaded guilty and was fined seventy-five dollars.²⁶ Cooley and Ringo entered pleas of not guilty to the remaining charges and moved for a change of venue to Lampasas County. The motion was granted and bail set at \$500 for each defendant.²⁷ District court minutes indicate that Clymer, Strickland, *Bulletin* editor Swift Ogle, City Marshal J. H. Stapp, and Miss M. McGuire were bonded to appear as witnesses in the case at the next term of district court.²⁸

Only days later mob violence claimed another victim close to Ringo. John Calvert, one of Ringo’s bondsmen for the disturbing the peace charges, was shot to death on February 16. Family recollections note that he “was shot to death in mysterious circumstances” on the front porch of his home in Burnet. He left a widow and four young children.²⁹

In less than a year, Ringo had acquired a reputation as a dangerous man. “Deputy Sheriff J. J. Strickland has acquired some notoriety for his courageous conduct in arresting the celebrated desperadoes, Scott Cooley and one Ringo, alias ‘Long John.’ Both of whom are in the jail at this place.”³⁰

Ringo and Cooley were transferred to Lampasas under heavy guard. Their arrival caused “quite an excitement.”³¹ Here they were convicted of the charges and Ringo filed an appeal. It would be some time before he would appear in court. Sheriff Albertus Sweet hobbled both men and placed them in the county jail, confident in his ability to hold them. It was a serious miscalculation. His security had already been breached. Bud Faris informed family members that fearing they would be lynched, he got himself arrested on a minor charge to check on the

jail's security.³²

DISAGREEABLE.—Between midnight and daylight on Sunday last [April 30], four disguised men suddenly sprang upon the jail guard at Lampasas, seized and tied him to a picket fence, his face towards the foe and his back towards the fence. They with pistols presented toward him, commanded him to be silent or die. He didn't die. Two of the four proceeded to the jail, and after handing Scott Cooley a file, they began boring and chiseling to make a hole where by the prisoners (Cooley and John Ringo) might escape. But they were compelled to raise the siege without obtaining their object. The near approach of daylight is supposed to have caused them to abandon their enterprise. The guard was carried about two miles on the San Saba road and turned loose upon the range. He returned to his old feeding place about daylight, and, after calmly surveying the premises and making sure that his late companions were all gone, and conscientiously believing that his obligation of silence and secrecy were removed, he dared to speak, and speaking he said he was thankful it was as well with him as it was.—Burnet Buletin [sic]³³

Sweet increased security. It was a futile effort. On May 4, a group of men arrived at Sweet's home and bluntly informed him that if he did not surrender the keys to the jail they would kill him and his family and have the keys anyway. The sheriff handed them over.³⁴ The party moved toward the jail where they encountered Deputy Sheriff J. T. Walker and another guard. "I was walking up with one of the guards near Stanifer's store when I saw a party of men coming up some 13 or 15 in no. [number] They told us not to shout that they had the keys & that if we hurt any of them that they would burn up the town with every one in it." Cooley and Ringo were quickly freed. "Their hobbles was laid over a log and cut in two with an old axe which was near the jail door."³⁵

Diverse sources provide identities for some of those allegedly involved in the jailbreak: Champ and Bud Faris, Ed and Bill Cavin, Ed Stedman, George Gamel, Joe Olney, John C. Carson, the Redding brothers, James P. Mason, Charley Ferguson, Bill Wills, and Ed Brown. One historian believed that Mannen Clements was involved, but no evidence to support this theory has been located.³⁶

Ringo and Cooley headed for Bluffton and the safety of Llano County, intending to take Solomon G. Maxwell's ferry across the Colorado River. "Horse" Maxwell, a huge man with a ready wit, did not know his customers but taking in Cooley's youth and size referred to him cordially as "Sonny." He was preparing to haul a load of hogs across the river when they arrived. For obvious reasons, the fugitives held their mounts on the opposite end of the ferry from the squealing pigs. Halfway across the river, the pigs suddenly stampeded to the fugitives' end of the ferry, tipping the craft and plunging men, horses and hogs into the river. The men swam safely to shore, caught their horses and rode off. Maxwell considered the incident uproariously funny—right up to the moment a posse arrived and told him who his passengers were.³⁷

On May 5 the men were at Joe Olney's home when Sheriff William P. Hoskins rode up. The lawman found himself unexpectedly surrounded by Baird allies. Among them was John C. Carson, a brother-in-law of the Bairds.

I saw J. C. Carson on the evening of the 5th of May 1876 with Ringo and Cooley in Llano County. Joe Olney, Andy Murchison, Bud Farris [sic], Jim Mason and Bill Wills & Charley Ferguson and some three or four others were also there in company with Ringo & Cooley. I went to see Joe Olney on official business & got within 25 yards of the house before they saw me. There appeared to be considerable excitement among them when they saw me, some got on their horses and others picked up their guns. I continued to ride up to them and spoke to Joe Olney and he asked me to get down. When I got down Scott Cooley threw a cartridge in his gun & stepped [sic] behind his horse.³⁸

After conversing with Olney, Ringo seized the opportunity and approached Hoskins. “I was at the back of the house a very short time,” Hoskins recalled. “Ringo shook hands with me & I asked him what he was doing here & he made some foolish remark.”³⁹

By May 8 the Baird faction were back in Mason, possibly hunting for John Clark. Clark, however, had fled to Missouri and Mason’s mob was broken. Lucia Holmes reported, “Scott Cooley and a crowd here.—No one knows what they are after.”⁴⁰

Ringo and the others remained through the ninth.⁴¹ “A gentleman recently arrived from Loyal Valley, reports that Scott Cooley and Ring-gold [*sic*], who were recently released from the jail at Lampasas by armed men, went to the hotel at Loyal Valley, in broad daylight, armed to the teeth and ate with perfect composure, and rode off unmolested.”⁴²

The pair returned to Llano County where the Faris family hid them on Long Mountain for around two weeks.⁴³ There Cooley quit the group and left for Blanco County where he enjoyed large support. “On his way he stopped in Fredericksburg and ate dinner at the Mintz [*sic* : Nimitz] Hotel. When he got ready to leave, he purchased a bottle of whiskey.”⁴⁴ While on the road he suddenly became ill and died shortly after. There are several versions of how Cooley died. Gamel states that he rode up to the home of Daniel Maddox, whom Gamel mistakenly identifies as Moore, “and in a few minutes he was dead.”⁴⁵ Rancher Max Gipson informed the author of a family tradition that Cooley had been found raving in a tree out on the range. He was brought to Maddox’s home in extreme agony and died later that night.⁴⁶ The symptoms described were those of a metallic poison, probably arsenic. He died around one o’clock on the morning of June 10, 1876, at the home of Dan Maddox.⁴⁷ Based upon a family member allegedly seeing Scott Cooley in Oklahoma during the 1900s, a family descendant maintains that Cooley faked his death to avoid the law.⁴⁸ A third account reports Cooley died of disease. Possibly his death was caused by a cerebral hemorrhage.⁴⁹

Regardless of how, or even whether, Cooley died, he was out of the feud after June 1876. Ringo was alive and well, and his reputation as a dangerous man grew significantly as the press spread rumor and innuendo.

A GENTLEMAN from the frontier says that Scott Cooley, Ring-gold and others, who were recently taken out of the Lampasas jail, have gone into camp, and that they defy the law and the authorities, and that there is no protection for life or property in many places up-country. He says that some men who have no viable means of support, and are suspected of being horse thieves, assert that the business don’t pay now very well, as horses only command from twenty to thirty-five dollars in Austin and other places, and that that does not pay for the trouble of getting them and taking them to market. It is currently reported that the whole country is filled with armed men—those snake-hatted, goat skin-leggined chaps—who are the terror to travelers and law-abiding citizens. Perhaps the Governor will yet find it necessary to issue a proclamation authorizing all good citizens to shoot down all notoriously bad characters, and to offer rewards for their scalps. The people are crying aloud for protection, law and order, and they should have it, even if extraordinary measures have to be resorted to. Never has so much lawlessness been experienced in Texas.⁵⁰

Traditionally, Cooley’s death has marked the end of the feud. In reality, hostilities raged on for nearly thirty years. Only John Clark eluded him. The Mason mob, abandoned by their leader and under unrelenting pressure, disbanded. This and the unilateral withdrawal of Baird from the fighting, left only the Rangers, Llano mob, and cattle thieves as organized forces in the region. Cooley also left behind him a legacy of animosity that more than a century later finally shows signs of abating.

With bitter irony, on the day Cooley died, a letter to the *San Antonio Herald* provided clear evidence that the trouble with cattle thieves was ongoing, perhaps worse since the attention of the local cattlemen had focused on revenge and survival.

Two-thirds and perhaps three-fourths of the killing and hanging done in Western Texas during the last two or three years grew out of the illegal handling of cattle, and we cannot reasonably hope for permanent peace and prosperity in our stock raising sections, to anything like the degree we would have, if the law were sustained until the people of these sections open their eyes to their own interest and first put their own houses in order and fit themselves to assist in arranging their neighbors premises.

For thieves to undertake to make honest men of others is not practicable, and there is no doubt but that nine tenths of the men are violating the law in some way either by branding calves not their own, killing meat not their own, selling cattle without the Power of Attorney the law requires them to have from the owner, changing ear marks and brands, road branding cattle not tallied and inspected, and driving them out of the country, deliberately stealing whole herds of cattle irrespective of law or ownership, or blotching out brands or counter branding and branding cattle not their own without authority, or in some way violating the law in regard to cattle.

“Stock Raiser” also raised the common issue that branding calves, killing beef, and selling cattle without the knowledge or consent of the owners was “utterly overlooked,” further adding that these men were “received and toasted in society as honest men.”

There are men in the country who never bought a cow in their lives who now have large stocks, and they get them by branding other peoples stock entirely, and if you will show me a man who cow hunts or lives in the country away from a butcher shop who does not brand calves or eat meat not his own and contrary to law, I will show you nine men to one that does do it Justice must be dealt out to all alike whether he be a preacher, a preacher’s son, a professed christian or a six shooter and bowie knife desperado, before we can have peace and order in our otherwise glorious Western Texas.⁵¹

Nothing had changed for the cattle thieves, and the words of D. S. Wills, penned a year earlier, were as true in 1876 as they had been in 1875.

Two-thirds of the stealing from this country is done by Mexicans direct from Mexico. I have lived on the San Saba river fifteen years, commanded a Ranger company during the war, followed Indians trails all the time which went north-west to the Comanche nation, now the trails go direct to old Mexico.

The year the war closed three hundred Mexicans drove 15,000 head of cattle from San Saba river and they have been driving each and every year since.⁵²

These raiders as well as Anglo gangs like the Notch Cutters from McDade continued to plague the area unhindered. Some of this would impact Ringo. With Cooley gone, Ringo became more newsworthy. In the months ahead, his name would appear in print often.

“State of Texas vs. John Ringo”

WHILE RINGO DODGED TEXAS LAW, in California his family was living comfortably, at least financially. Mary was working as a dressmaker, and Fanny found employment as a milliner.¹ Mary’s health was deteriorating, however, as tuberculosis racked her body. As the disease entered its final phases, Mary anticipated her death. On July 5, 1876, she finalized her will, bequeathing everything to her children. “I do hereby bequeath to my daughters Fanny F. Ringo, Mary E. Ringo & Mattie B. Ringo the homestead, together with the furniture to share & share alike, but with the understanding that the same shall not be sold, until Mattie B. Ringo my younger daughter shall have attained the age of twenty one years. My son John Ringo having been here to fore provided for I bequeath him the sum of one dollar.”² That Mary could leave an estate does not indicate poverty as some authors suggest. Mary, supplemented by funds from John, was independent.

Less than two weeks later, Mary Peters Ringo died, on July 16, 1876. The *Liberty Tribune* published a brief obituary: “Died at her residence in San Jose, California, July 16th of consumption, Mrs. Mary Ringo, widow of the late Martin Ringo and daughter of the late John R. Peters of Clay Co., in her 50th yr. In 1848 she was married to Martin Ringo, moved to Indiana, then back to Missouri. And settled in Gallatin, and in 1864 the family went to California, Mr. Ringo accidentally killing himself on the route.”³

John remained unaware of his mother’s death, perhaps for weeks, while his problems continued to mount. On June 24, 1876, he was indicted for “Aiding a prisoner to escape from the Custody of a lawful Officer.”⁴ The charge may have stemmed from an attempt by Ringo to liberate Bill Redding. Redding was captured in Llano County. The *Burnet Bulletin* reported:

Deputy [Joseph] Leverett, of Llano county, who has just returned from carrying Reddin to Austin for safe keeping, reports that thirteen of Reddin’s friends were seen ambushed in the cedar brake this side of Austin waiting for them to pass, so as to liberate the prisoners and kill the guard. Leverett and Sheriff [John J.] Strickland went by Round Rock, and thereby avoiding an attack. It is reported that some one of the waylaying party remarked that they would never get as good an opportunity to kill Strickland and Leverett. The notorious Ringo, who seems to have been the leader, is certainly a very desperate and daring man. All but three of the party finally dispersed, leaving them to waylay Leverett on his return. But the news reached him, and, with the aid of the Sheriff of Travis county [Dennis Corwin] and about thirty men, he made a search for but failed to find them. Leverett says that he was assured of the co-operation of the citizens of Williamson and Travis counties in pursuing and hunting down such characters, who are ready to release prisoners and murder county officers while attempting to do their duty.

Who informed the *Bulletin* of the comments of the ambushers is unrecorded, and probably existed only in the editor’s mind.

What was recorded, adjacent to the article, was a thinly veiled threat that reads in part, “There are still among us those who are ever ready to notify these thieves of any move that might be made by the sheriff to arrest them. But the eyes of the people are upon them, and a

continuance of harboring and shielding such characters will bring them into trouble.”⁵

Ironically, Redding was arrested due to confusion over his identity with Bill Reddin, one of those involved in a bank robbery at Comanche, Texas.⁶ The robbers were identified as Joe and George Horner and Bill Reddin.⁷

Ringo made news again in August. On the seventeenth, a telegram from Fredericksburg to the *Galveston News* reported that “John Ringo and Bill Randall” had driven off cattle “from Gooch, Hogan, Neighbors and others.”⁸ Poses swarmed in pursuit. E. F. Cullen, of Walter Tine & Co. informed the *Burnet Bulletin* that on August 21 the sheriff of Mason County and twenty-five men had entered Kimble County to capture cattle thieves. “Ringo is in charge of the stolen cattle.”⁹ This is the only accusation against Ringo for cattle theft in Texas, and it proved false. Truth first came from A. T. Taylor. Taylor knew Ringo was in Llano County, particularly when the Taylors were helping him. “Mr. A. T. Taylor, just from Llano county, informs us that rumors are prevalent that a fight had taken place between the party having charge of the stolen cattle in Kimble county and the pursuers. Several were killed and wounded. R. K. Tucker, who once lived here, was said to have had charge of the cattle and was killed in the fight. Mr. Taylor is certain that it is a mistake about John Ringo being connected with the cattle stealing.”¹⁰ A similar article appeared in Austin papers: “The deputy sheriff of Burnet county has summoned a posse of men and gone into Mason county to arrest Cooley and Ringgold and associates. The clan numbers many and a fight is expected. Last week some cattle men in Burnet county lost about 400 head of cattle; followed the trail with a party, overhauled the cattle and thieves on the Concho, killed four or five and arrested one.”¹¹

Taylor’s statements were confirmed when the posse overtook the thieves. Randall was killed and the cattle recovered. Ringo was not among the cattle thieves and was not charged in the incident. Yet the stories persisted. As one historian states, “with the constant stories being published in the newspapers, some people now considered him to be a rustler [cattle thief].”¹² Perhaps, but contemporary memoirs of individuals do not comment on the connection.



Abraham Teal Taylor. *Courtesy Loretta Lynn.*

N. C. Patterson recalled in 1928 that “Some of these old timers around Mason, Fredericksburg and Llano could tell you about John Ringgold [*sic* : Ringo] and Scott Cooley, as I have heard they led some of these folks a cat’s life in the early seventies.”¹³ J. A. Joiner’s garbled recollection was that “Frank [*sic* : Scott] Cooley, George Gladden, and John Ringo were killers.”¹⁴

Ringo was in Mason County on September 5. “Hal started to Bluff Creek and came back on account of Ringold being out there. . . . Heard that Ringold had threatened Hal so Hal got his arms ready if he should come to the house.”¹⁵ Why Ringo would threaten Henry M. Holmes is a mystery, and may have been a rumor. However the mere mention of his name apparently sent fear through the town. Sheriff Jesse W. Leslie made no attempt to find and arrest him. One newspaper made a similar report concerning Llano County, noting several men were “defying all law and order” and threatened two men named Roundtree and Oatman.¹⁶

As 1876 wore on, the feud continued. Baird’s allies remained concerned with the Llano mob. Miles Barler boasted, “We formed a vigilante committee and elected a captain. Well, they were the ones who had to leave the country, and don’t forget it; that is, the leaders, and most of the others.”¹⁷

One of “the others” was Joe Olney. Early on the morning of September 7 two strangers rode up to Olney’s house along the Colorado River and asked him for directions to the ford. Suspicious, Olney grabbed his rifle and followed them. The pair noticed and turned back. The story to this point is consistent among the participants, but diverges after this. The strangers claimed they noticed Olney following them, rode back and demanded his surrender. At that point he drew his pistol and shot both of them.¹⁸ Olney claimed that they had their saddle guns out and got the drop on him. He dropped his rifle and one of them fired. In the ensuing gunfight he shot both men.¹⁹

Regardless of who fired first, the gunfight proved catastrophic for the Olney family, ultimately forcing Joe and most of his brothers to leave Texas.²⁰ The men were Samuel B. Martin, a Burnet County Deputy Sheriff and brother-in-law of Sheriff J. J. Strickland, and Wilson Rountree, brother of Llano mob leader Bob Rountree. Martin died on September 11, 1876. Rountree recovered.

The law wasted no time pursuing Olney. Shortly after the gunfight, a posse from Llano cornered him in a log cabin. Riding up to the door, they ordered him to come out. “Sure thing boys,” yelled Joe. A moment later he stepped through the door laughing and told them to come and get him.

Posse member Clint Breazeale recalled his chill of horror as eight or nine rifle muzzles suddenly thrust through the cabin windows at point-blank range. “It was the most stupid thing we ever did. If one cap had been fired we would have all been killed.”²¹ Olney let them retire unharmed. In the cabin were John Ringo, George Gladden, Champ and Bud Faris, and some of the Akes among others.²²

Fear of mob action was not farfetched. On September 11 the mob struck unsuccessfully at Ed Cavin. The *Burnet Bulletin* reported:

Mr. John Haynes, a merchant of Backbone Valley, tells us that he learned the news had reached the Lacy’s that Jim Williams, a son-in-law of Mr. Jake [Jacob M.] Lacy, was killed by a party of men who rode up to his camp about daylight and shot him several times, killing him.

Ed. Cavin, who was with Williams, ran as soon as he saw the men approaching. He says, shortly after leaving the camp he heard several shots and heard Williams hollow. It is not known who did the killing, but supposed to be some of the Mason county men who were probably trying to catch Cavin. This occurred Monday morning the 11th, six miles this side of Llano town.²³

Ed Cavin may have been targeted for death based on the belief he had a role in the killing of Peter Bader. Possibly the killers wanted Jim Williams who probably accompanied Ringo in the killing of Jim Chaney.²⁴ Perhaps they wanted both men. These mob triggermen were the Dublin brothers, outlaws who hid under the protection of the mob.²⁵ The killing may have prompted retaliation. Miles Barler claimed that he was hauling a load of corn from Bluffton to Llano when he was warned that the “Ringo crowd” planned to ambush him.²⁶

In a flurry of activity following Williams’ killing, Sheriff William Hoskins of Llano was forced to resign by the mob when he attempted to have four of their leaders prosecuted for Williams’ murder. They then turned their attention to Olney kinsmen, and on October 13, 1876, his cousin, William Erwin, was killed by Jiles Mackey.²⁷ Erwin was a son of William Erwin and Ann Tanner. Family sources believe he was killed because “Members of the Mob thought

the boy overheard a conversation between members of the mob.”²⁸

Ringo’s luck ran out on October 31 when a combined force of local possemen, led by Llano County Sheriff J. J. Bozarth, and Texas Rangers captured him and Gladden.²⁹ By November 7 the men were in Austin. The *Statesman* stated, “John Ringo . . . was regarded as one of the most desperate men in the frontier counties.”³⁰ J. C. Sparks of Company C reported his activities on December 1, 1876. The mingled information has created some confusion.

Sparks begins with the inspection of a herd at Cain’s ranch with Sheriff J. J. Bozarth. Sparks accompanied him because “several parties charged with cattle stealing were in that vicinity.” At Cain’s they were satisfied with the cattle’s title. On October 16 he detailed men to proceed to Loyal Valley to learn where “Gladden, Ringo, Thompson and others” were and to learn where a herd driven by Eb. Stewart had gone.

Sparks determined that the herd had been driven toward Austin on the west side of the Colorado River. Sparks and nine others pursued Stewart and caught up with him on October 26. Along with Neil Cain, Eb. Stewart, and Frank Enox, Sparks found the herd inspected earlier that month “accompanied by another herd numbering eighty-five head” that had been stolen “from the counties of Mason, Llano, Gillespie and Blanco.” Sparks arrested Stewart and got a bonus in netting Billy Thompson.³¹

The arrests broke up the cattle theft ring that had plagued Mason and other counties. Cain’s gang was called the Notch Cutters or Yegua Notch Cutters and was composed of Cain, Cal Null, Dave Fream, and others.³² Billy Thompson was in the wrong place at the wrong time. He was charged with murder in Texas and Kansas.³³ Ringo and Gladden were erroneously linked to the Notch Cutters by Sparks’ report. Sparks makes this clear. “I will now return to the operations of the balance of Company C, at Llano.”

Shortly after Sparks left, the remaining Rangers learned where Gladden and Ringo were hiding. Sheriff J. J. Bozarth and Sergeant A. W. Robinson, accompanied by twelve men, arrested both men, where they were “living at a hut some miles above Cold Springs.”³⁴ The Rangers were ordered to Austin, “but fearing the release of the prisoners,” they took them along.³⁵

The hunt for Joe Olney now intensified. On November 2, Dan Olney and Alex Erwin were arrested on a charge of cattle theft.³⁶ Will Olney was taken in December on a similar charge.³⁷ The charges, all too familiar in the Hill Country, were intended to prompt Joe’s surrender, but the plan did not succeed.

For Ringo and Gladden, the fighting was over. In late November, Gladden was taken to Llano. On November 27 Gladden and his guards arrived in Burnet. Here the *Bulletin* reported the “principal charge against him in Llano county is the killing of Peter Bader.”³⁸ On December 4, the *Bulletin* reported district court was in session in Llano. “The case of the State of Texas vs. George Gladden, on indictment for murder, will be taken up this week. Considerable drunkenness and uneasiness the first part of the week but everything is quiet now.”³⁹ Gladden was convicted on December 7, 1876, and sentenced to life in the penitentiary.⁴⁰

As 1876 closed, Ringo’s future appeared bleak. Even then many of his allies were fleeing Texas. Joseph Leverett reported in early December “that Reddin[g] and several of his friends

have left for a more remote location in the west.”⁴¹ Jeff Ake recalled, “Well, both gangs held a compromise meeting with the sheriffs and rangers, and the Beard-Gladden outfit agreed to move out of the country if they was left alone. That was the understanding. They gathered up their cattle, about 1,400 head, and started west. At Brownwood, the sheriff arrested a couple of the boys; but this was breaking the agreement so they forced him to turn ’em loose.”⁴²

Whatever the facts of the deal, if there was one, the jail break at Brownwood in May 1877 was very real. At 3:30 in the afternoon four men entered the jail and confronted Sheriff R. B. Wilson with drawn pistols. The raiders liberated four prisoners, including one of the Olneys, Tom Redding, Mike Blakely, and John Robison. Among the rescuers were Bill Redding, Jacob and Martin Lacy, Pete Casner, and Joe Olney.⁴³

On January 21, 1877, a fire destroyed the Mason County courthouse.⁴⁴ On May 14 District Attorney F. D. Wilkes substituted a new indictment.⁴⁵ Named on the indictment were “John Ringo, Geo. Gladden and others.” Hespert Nicholas, S. F. Bridges and Martin Moran were named as witnesses. The case against Ringo became Cause 21.

Ringo was shuttled around the Hill Country frequently that year. On May 31 the firm of Makemson, Posey & Fisher appealed Ringo’s March 1876 conviction in Lampasas, but it was reaffirmed.⁴⁶ Ringo entered a second appeal that was heard on June 29, 1877, before Justice J. Winkler. Observing that the judge had failed “to charge the alternative punishment,” Winkler reversed the decision and remanded the case to Lampasas on July 25, 1877.⁴⁷

In Mason the trial of John Ringo began with a motion to substitute papers for those lost in the courthouse fire.⁴⁸ Any lingering hopes Ringo harbored of another rescue were soon crushed. During July, J. J. Strickland arrested six men charged in the May 1876 break: Bud and Champ Faris, Andy Murchison, Ed Brown, Jim Mason, and John C. Carson.⁴⁹ In due course others were also charged including Ed Stedman, George Gamel, John Baird, Bill Redding, and Joe Olney. Only Stedman would serve any time in prison. On September 30, 1878, he entered a plea of guilty and was sentenced to prison for two years. Writing to his wife, Jane, John Wesley Hardin reported that “ed [sic] Steadman who come here for Breaking John Ringo and Sco Cooley out of the Lampasas Jail is Dead died of Sickness on the 11th.”⁵⁰

On November 12, 1877, the Mason court issued a *capias* ordering Ringo’s arrest.⁵¹ A week later he was sent back to Austin guarded by seven Texas Rangers.⁵² With him were George Gladden, who was appealing his conviction, and a cattle thief named Ed Mitchell. The rangers were commanded by Corporal J. W. Warren and accompanied by Sheriff J. J. Bozarth and a liveryman from Llano, Col. Wright. Readers of the *Galveston Daily News* were shocked in December to learn that the command had been massacred and the prisoners liberated. While camped along the Colorado River a Ranger identified as “Mervyn” awoke to discover that Warren was dead, “his face turned up, his carbine grasped in his pulseless hand.” The carnage was terrible. “There they were, the sheriff, the Rangers, Col. Wright, and all but the three prisoners, lying ghastly and rigid beneath the moon.” The prisoners were gone, their shackles lying close to a pit. Undeterred, Mervyn followed the fugitives into the pit and found himself confronted by a devil who flung him into a boiling cauldron. At this point the man awoke from his nightmare when a bullet he had in his rear pocket exploded, ignited by a chunk of fire.⁵³

The dream may have unintentionally been drug induced. Only days before the men left Llano it was reported that “a village druggist, when drunk made up a prescription for the sergeant of the guard, and, by mistake, included poison.”⁵⁴

The Travis County jail held a number of hard men at the time, including John Wesley Hardin. Hardin recalled: “In that jail I met some noted men. Bill Taylor, George Gladden, John Ringo, Manning Clements, [Samuel J.] Pipes and [Albert G.] Herndon of the Bass gang, John Collins, Jeff Ake, and Brown Bowen.”⁵⁵ One undocumented modern source states that Hardin “reputedly and incongruously complained about being cast into the lock-up with the likes of anyone as mean and vicious as John Ringo.”⁵⁶ Interviews with Hardin historians indicate the view is unsupportable. On the contrary, Hardin’s contemporary Bill Longley implied that Hardin thought highly of Ringo.

Did you see the interview that was given out by John Wesley Hardin when he was first brought to Austin? He said in that interview that he had never had anything to do with Bill Longley, nor any other such characters, and that he never had anything to do with anybody except gentlemen of honor. Now as a matter of information I would like to know where these gentlemen of honor friends of his are now? They certainly are not in jail where the Honorable John Wesley is himself. I wonder if it is King Fisher, Brown Bowen, Bill Taylor, Gladden, Ringo, Scott Cooley, Grissom and two or three dozen more whom I might name.⁵⁷

Thirty-three men were ordered to appear as a special venue for Ringo’s trial on November 12. Subpoenas for Mrs. Mary Bridges, Ben F. Stewart and Mrs. Jim Cheyney [*sic* : Chaney] were issued.⁵⁸ Ringo had been in jail for more than a year, and now his lawyer filed a writ of habeas corpus.

In December Ringo appeared in Mason again. “The rangers, under Corporal Warren, arrived in Mason a few days before Christmas with John Ringo, who was tried by virtue of a writ of habeas corpus and the bond fixed at \$2,500. The bond was filed and Ringo set at liberty.”⁵⁹ Gladden however was headed for the penitentiary. *The Texas Capital* reported that Gladden, Charles Hammond [*sic* : Hammons] and George Sawyers “passed through this city on Monday last on their way to the penitentiary. The first got 99 years for murder; Sawyers 10 years for stealing a cow; and Hammond one year for hog trading without the consent of the rightful owner.”⁶⁰

William Gamel, Michael Foley, George Anstal, C. W. Wingfield, and Robert H. Moseley gave bond for Ringo on January 11, 1878. Ringo was temporarily free, but the threat of prison or the hangman’s noose loomed. If ever there was a time to run, it was now.

“brave and fearless”

“SO MUCH FOR HIS WORD being as good as his bond,” offers one writer concerning Ringo’s failure to appear for the disturbing the peace hearing in 1875.¹ Perhaps. The reason Ringo missed the hearing on these minor charges is unknown. His actions following his release from jail on January 11, 1878, however, strongly support claims by his contemporaries that his word was good. He now faced murder charges, and Ringo had ample opportunity to flee Mason’s hostile environment before his next court date more than two weeks later. In late January George Gamel was arrested in connection with the Lampasas jail break.² His father William could hardly be blamed had he surrendered Ringo’s bond. He did not.

As noted previously, at least one author claims that Ringo may have killed John R. Clark in 1878. The writer believed that if John R. Clark was sheriff in Mason it was “very likely that John Ringo killed him in January of 1878, just after Ringo’s release from jail, prior to his indictment being quashed.”³ John R. Clark died of food poisoning on January 10, 1878, however, the day before Ringo was released from jail.⁴

On January 19 a flood of subpoenas in Ringo’s case were issued.⁵ Soon after, Ringo was in trouble in neighboring Kimble County. On February 4 the Rangers arrested Ringo and Robert McIver for disturbing the peace.⁶ No further records relating to the case have been located.

On March 10 Ringo’s murder trial was postponed.⁷ In Lampasas the prosecution requested “further time to substitute the papers” in the case.⁸ On April 18 additional subpoenas were issued in Mason.⁹ On the same day, Ringo appeared in court and filed an affidavit of attachment stating that he “can not safely go to trial without the testimony of Bud Farris, Andies Murchison, Wm. Olney who reside in the County of Llano State of Texas and Carl Akard who resides in Bandera Co., Mark Hopkins who resides in Gillespie Co., Westly Johnson, Sam Monroe who resides in Kimble County.”¹⁰

Little is known of Hopkins and Akard. Andes Henry Murchison was the son of Daniel Alexander Murchison and Wilhemina Holzgreve and was born March 9, 1855, at New Braunfels, Texas. Despite their German heritage, the Murchisons allied themselves with John Baird. A cattleman, in later years Andy Murchison ran a mercantile store in Menard. On December 1, 1889, he married Jacqueline Dupree. Murchison died in Menard on November 5, 1952. Samuel Evans Malone, born February 1, 1845, in Vermilion County, Indiana, married Laura Ann Faris January 1, 1877. He died at Eureka Springs, Arkansas, on July 8, 1900.

On May 13 a special venue for prospective jurors was issued. Fortune had turned in Ringo’s favor. On May 15, at the request of the district attorney, the final order was issued. “That testimony cannot now be procured to make out the case. Said case to be dismissed.”¹¹ Ringo

was free, and the news spread quickly.¹²

In Lampasas the charges against him were never seriously pursued. Court records note a loss of papers on September 12, 1877. Two further entries requested time to substitute them. On June 29 the case's reversal was entered on the Lampasas docket where it languished for two years.¹³ The cases were dismissed on November 11, 1879.¹⁴

Ringo settled in Mason County where many of his enemies lived. With the charges behind him, he made a bid for a law enforcement position, running for constable of Precinct 4 in Mason. He was elected with roughly two thirds of the votes.¹⁵ It is unknown if community leader John Meusebach supported him.¹⁶

On November 22 Ringo registered his brand: a V on the left side.¹⁷ The late historian and rancher Janaloo Hill examined the brand and suggested that the owner was "either stupid, or a tenderfoot, or both. My second thought is that he might have been playing some sort of double game in which it profited him to look the injured party. A V presents no end of opportunities for brand running or altering."¹⁸ Ringo was neither stupid nor naive, and the most likely reason for the brand's simplicity was to forestall accusations of cattle theft in Mason's harsh environs. All indications are that he intended to settle permanently.

Loyal Valley, far from being a hangout for outlaws, was the home of some of Mason County's most respected citizens.¹⁹ Nor are there indications Ringo was an alcoholic. Loyal Valley was a dry community in the late 1870s. Ringo was recalled by "Wild John" Davis' Colorado River family simply as the man who gave Davis his nickname.²⁰ Henry Cox recalled, "My grandparents Charles Simms and Martha Angeline (Couts) Cox lived in Mason, Texas before, during and after the Mason County War. Grandma told me they liked John Ringo, a pleasant, polite and fun-loving young man."²¹

With his future seemingly secure, Ringo suddenly abandoned everything in late 1878 or early 1879 and left Texas. N. C. Patterson encountered Ringo as he headed west. A former mail carrier, Patterson recalled encountering a lone horseman while resting during a delivery.

I noticed he was pretty well armed. I ventured to ask him if he was afraid of Indians. He said, "I don't know, as I have never met one." He then told me his name was Ringgold. I told him my name, but did not pretend that I had ever heard of him. Some of these old timers around Mason, Fredericksburg and Llano could tell you about Ringgold and Scott Cooley, as I have heard they led some of these folks a cat's life in the early seventies. He told me he was going further West.²²

One grandson of Joe Olney offered an explanation for Ringo's leaving Texas. In 1933 Ed Olney visited Joe's family in Arizona. One evening Ed recalled how he left Texas. According to the grandson, Ed and his brother Oscar were arrested on trumped-up charges in Llano County to force Joe's return. John Ringo was sent west to tell Joe that Ed and Oscar would "stay in there and rot" until Joe returned.²³

This story, however, poses problems. In 1878 Oscar was thirteen, hardly an age to be thrown into jail, and he was in Texas as late as 1882 when he was indicted for the theft of a shotgun in Bell County.²⁴ He was indicted again April 24, 1882, for horse theft.²⁵ Oscar was not prosecuted for horse theft, the court ruling in 1883 that "the indictment is legally insufficient."²⁶ In 1892 the theft charge was also dismissed.²⁷ These events place Oscar in Texas during the early 1880s. But if Oscar was not involved, who was? Of the brothers, John

Olney never settled in Arizona, and Sam Olney did not arrive until the early 1880s. Both Dan and George Olney accompanied Joe west in 1877 which leaves only Joe's brother Will.

In New Mexico Joe Olney adopted the alias Joe Hill and purchased a ranch in Old Mexico. During the Lincoln County War in New Mexico, Governor Lew Wallace ordered the arrests of thirty-six men, including Joe Olney.²⁸ The order stemmed from a list of men provided by Billy the Kid. "Joseph Hill (alias Olney) killing a Deputy Shff. In Burnettown, Texas—sandy complected."²⁹ On March 23, 1879, the Kid informed Wallace that Mimbres was "situated 30 miles on the road to Cruces from Silver City South. A great many of what are known as the 'Gist [*sic* : Wes] Hardin gang are there. Among them Joe Olney, known in Mimbres as Joe Hill; he has a ranch in old Mexico somewhere near Coralitos. He makes trips up in this country; was at Pinasco not long ago."³⁰

The Kid was truthful. In 1878, Grant County, New Mexico, was suddenly invaded by small armies of feudists from the Hoo Doo War and the El Paso Salt War. The arrival of two heavily armed and potentially violent armies was not cause for celebration. Sheriff Harvey Whitehill soon learned there was a vast difference between them. The Hoo Doo War fighters settled down, blending into the area in near obscurity. The Salt War veterans were men of a different ilk.³¹ Many were members of John Kinney's gang of thieves and killers such as Charles Ray, alias Pony Diehl, and Sherm McMaster, a former Texas Ranger.

When Ringo left Loyal Valley he was fulfilling obligations incurred years earlier when Joe liberated him from the Lampasas jail. "Mr. Carson said Ringo ought never to forget Joe Olney, that he had ridden day & night to get him out."³² Ringo did not forget. It may well be with this journey in mind that one paper eulogized, "He was recognized by friends and foes as a recklessly brave man, who would go any distance, or undergo any hardship to serve a friend or punish an enemy."³³

Family lore tells that Ringo and Olney returned to Llano to free Olney's brothers. Ed Olney recalled that he and his brother were sitting on their bunks when "suddenly the back of the jail blew out." Then they were in the saddle and fleeing west to Ysleta, Texas. Their time there was necessarily brief, giving the men no time to form alliances as postulated by one writer.³⁴ All of them were now on the run, and Joe had a wife and children waiting for him. According to Ed, Joe handed them a wad of money and told them to go north because it "might not be healthy for them where he was going."³⁵ This probably was a reference to Joe's concern about the governor of the Territory of New Mexico, Lew Wallace, who had recently had him arrested. It also confirms that the brother with Ed was Will Olney, an active participant in the feud, who settled in Idaho.³⁶

At Ysleta, Ringo and Olney joined a wagon train led by John Parks. Parks, born in Kentucky in 1843, had settled in Acton, Texas, and married Louise Ann Epley on March 9, 1865. In 1879 the family had decided to resettle in New Mexico and arrived at Ysleta during August. Their daughter Jennie recalled that the party lay over in Ysleta for some time because the Apache raider Victorio and his men had left the reservation and were raiding in the Gila Valley.³⁷

According to Jennie Ringgold, Parks' daughter, the wagon train intended to leave Ysleta in November although their departure can be dated to early October.³⁸ It was a poor decision. On September 4, Victorio had struck the Ninth U. S. Cavalry, killing five soldiers and capturing

forty-six horses at Ojo Caliente, Arizona. Twelve days later he successfully ambushed the cavalry in the Black Range Mountains of New Mexico, killing another five soldiers and three scouts.

John Ringo and another man approached the Parks wagon train as it was preparing to leave. The men were heavily armed, each with two pistols, a Winchester, and two belts of cartridges. John Parks took their measure as “brave and fearless,” hard men who would be good in a fight. In later years, John Parks forgot the name of the second man. Jennie believed it might have been John Baird, who physically resembled Olney. She recalled that her father told her in 1882 that the pair “were so courteous and considerate of the other members of the train that they made many friends.”³⁹ Later she wrote, “My father thought very highly of John Ringo, and he was a good judge of human character.”⁴⁰ In a separate letter she adds, “he (the husband of a friend) met men who knew John Ringo personally, and that he was very dark and was well spoken of as a man of principle and and [sic] his word was as good as a bond with all the officers and business men excepting the Earps and their faction.”⁴¹

Believing themselves well prepared, the party left for Silver City, reaching Mesilla without incident. From there they headed for Slocum’s ranch, a popular stop between Mesilla and Fort Cummings. On the way a hard riding, heavily armed party overtook them and hurried on to Lloyd’s ranch. Lloyd’s had been raided by the Apaches on October 10. The Lloyds were not at home, but there were several people camped nearby, including George Ackenback, who rode for help while the others hid. Ackenback reached the village of El Colorado, now Rodey, and persuaded five men to return with him. A mile short of the ranch they were ambushed, and in the quick and deadly affair, four of them were killed.⁴² Ackenback and Julian Torres managed to escape.

While the ill-fated rescuers headed to Lloyd’s, messengers had been sent to settlements along the Rio Grande for aid. Another party started for the Lloyd ranch but were ambushed at La Ceja Canyon and pursued back to their village, where they managed to hold off their attackers.

Under the leadership of Eugene Van Patten, a troop consisting of seventeen men left Mesilla around 5 o’clock in the afternoon of October 12. Members of the party included Dr. William B. Lyon, William T. Jones, J. B. Hinds, Nepomuseno Barragan, Vencelao Lara, Cleto Sanches, Pancho Beltran, Jacinto Armijo, N. L. Hickey, and Filoman Barela.⁴³ The party overtook and passed the Parks train on October 13.

Around one o’clock on the afternoon of October 13, Van Patten’s party spotted three apparently abandoned horses some distance ahead. Wary of an ambush, they paused to check their weapons and tighten their saddles before advancing. The Apaches opened fire from behind some low mounds that the riders had scarcely noticed. Jones was shot through the head and killed instantly. His companions fled, and a running fight ensued in which Cleto Sanches was shot from his horse but continued to fight until shot in the chest at pointblank range. Van Patten shot Sanches’ killer through the head and reportedly shot another of the attackers “clean through the body.”⁴⁴ It was a vain effort. Barragan, Lara and Beltran were killed, and the fight became a rout. Riding ahead of the others, M. L. Hickey caught up with the wagons, yelled that the Apaches had ambushed them and exhorted the train to turn back. He was also able to warn

a stagecoach following the train.

Parks held a hurried conference. Many of the wagons were drawn by oxen and had no chance of reaching Slocum's. Ringo and Olney were willing to shoot it out and the emboldened men resolved to circle the wagons and dig a pit in the center from which they could fight. The women pleaded with them to make a break for the sake of the children. After some discussion, the men agreed and unloaded the horse-drawn wagons for their families. It was a prudent decision. Within minutes the Apaches arrived but paused to plunder the abandoned wagons and gave Parks' party time to reach safety. Everything was destroyed except the wagons which rain prevented from burning. It was a cheap price to pay for their lives.⁴⁵

At Silver City, Ringo and Olney left the train and headed south to join Joe's family. Olney was resolved on resettling in the San Simon Valley of southeastern Arizona. J. C. Hancock described the area.

The San Simon Valley lies between the Stein's Peak and Peloncillo [sic: Peloncillo] mountains on the north and the Chiricahua mountains on the south and empties out into the Gila River at Solomon-ville. About where the Arizona and New Mexico State line crosses the valley is what is called the San Simon Cienga. [sic: cienega] This Cienga rises on the New Mexico side and runs toward the Gila on the Arizona side, and on the old maps made by the early Spanish and American explorers was designated as the "San Simon River." . . . From the head of the Cienga toward the Mexican line the valley was practically unexplored, although it was rumored that some of the old "Rustlers" used to claim there was quite a number of good sized water holes or springs in that section if a man knew just where to look for them.⁴⁶

The valley was ideal for ranching. There were profitable beef markets at Tombstone and Arizona's other mining camps, not to mention various army posts, were relatively close. Equally accessible were the San Carlos reservation and the New Mexico mining camps. To the south were springs for watering cattle. Herds driven north from Olney's ranch in Mexico could be fattened in the San Simon before taking them on to market. Joe Olney was one of the first settlers in the area. "In the late 70s some white families settled on the Cienga, among them was J. A. (Gus) Chenoweth [sic: Chenoweth], W. A. Stark, Al George, Joe Hill and a man by the name of Ware and old Nick Hughes and John McGill, a soldier who had been discharged from the 6th Cavalry at Fort Bowie."⁴⁷

At Chenoweth's, William Stark and Al George encountered Ringo for the first time. Stark's sons recalled that he and George paused at San Simon because their mules were tired. The men turned the animals loose in a pasture and took a nap, waking later to discover that the mules had strayed. Close by was a house, and when they knocked on the door Ringo answered. Stark explained that their mules had strayed, and Ringo responded, "Take my horse and go get them."⁴⁸

John Ringo believed he would be able to live down his past. Paradoxically it was here that the first signs of his decline appear. Ringo began to drink heavily and the *Epitaph* also reported "he frequently threatened to commit suicide."⁴⁹ Existing correspondence of twentieth-century researcher Allen Erwin gives no hint of a drinking problem prior to Ringo's arrival in Arizona. This is a more recent myth.⁵⁰ Ringo had emerged from the feud a darker presence.

Ringo may have been suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome, a psychological condition also known as shell shock or battle fatigue found among combat veterans. In essence, the suppression of trauma manifests itself over time in various symptoms including drug abuse, alcoholism, depression, violence, and suicide. There is abundant evidence that the feud left its

mark on the participants. Peter Jordan in later years suffered vivid nightmares and flashbacks.⁵¹ Ed Olney carried a pocket pistol until he died convinced that the mob would send men to kill him.⁵² Others, such as John Faris, became troublesome. The *Santa Fe New Mexican* reported that on December 29, 1879, Faris was killed by Pat Garrett's brother-in-law, Barney Mason. "Farris shot three times at Mason without any provocation, when the latter went off, got a pistol and returning to the store where Farris was shot him twice in the breast."⁵³

Other alternatives are possible. Ringo might have suffered from clinical depression that manifests the same types of symptoms. Perhaps he had simply become hardened to the violence of the frontier. All of this is speculation. Any attempt to psychoanalyze the dead is dangerous. What is a fact is that he had changed when he reached Arizona. The first signs appeared on December 9, 1879.

More of It.

Last Tuesday night a shooting affair took place at Safford in which Louis Hancock was shot by John Ringo. It appears Ringo wanted Hancock to take a drink of whisky, and he refused saying he would prefer beer. Ringo struck him over the head with his pistol and then fired, the ball taking effect in the lower end of the left ear, and passing through the fleshy part of the neck, half inch more in the neck would have killed him. Ringo is under arrest.⁵⁴

Ringo may not have been trying to kill Hancock. The pistol might well have discharged by accident, a not uncommon occurrence, when Ringo struck Hancock with it. Whatever the case, Ringo had announced his entry into Arizona with blood and violence in a pointless and unjustifiable shooting. He would never live it down.

“disrupting a young economy”

IN CALIFORNIA, HIS SISTERS, unaware of John’s shooting of Louis Hancock, were involved in a different sort of activity. On December 11 Coleman Younger gave a dinner party for a number of his friends. “The Misses Ringo, nieces of the Colonel, and children of pioneers were there; also Miss Fox and Miss Mary White” among others. Mary Enna had reason to be merry, having graduated from the State Normal School of San Jose the previous May.¹

Ringo arrived in Arizona in 1879 as Tombstone was being established. Destined to eclipse other mining camps, Tombstone was more like Virginia City than the cattle towns of Wichita or Dodge City. James C. Hancock recalled Tombstone as a “rich mining camp” with “first class restaurants.”

The Can-Can restaurant was named after a very popular dance performed at the Bird Cage by two or more couples in which the ladies were somewhat scantily clad. The Oriental saloon was not considered a very safe place if a man was known to have money on him. The Crystal Palace was the finest saloon in the camp, and the bar and fixtures were equal to any in San Francisco. . . . Nearly all traveling theatrical troops stopped over and put on their shows at the Bird Cage unless it was some high brow outfit and these generally showed at Schefflein’s Hall. Tombstone had the air and personality of the old time mining camps of Nevada in the Comstock days where everybody had money and demanded the best.²

The town has become inextricably linked to the colorful characters popularized by Burns’ *Tombstone*, especially one of the most controversial figures in frontier history, Wyatt Earp, together with the so-called “Cowboy Curse.” The term came to be applied to the lawlessness along the border, most of which has been charged to John Ringo and others. It has been embraced by apologists and myth makers intent on maintaining the town’s folklore, at the expense of truth.

Like all boom towns, Tombstone attracted individuals from all walks of life. As news of the Tombstone strike spread, “speculative minds concocted strategies for economic success. The enterprising ‘boomer’ could extract new wealth from the ground, or from the pockets of those who did.”³ These included honest men, bunco artists, conmen, sneak thieves and prostitutes. These parasites of society “migrated west down the railroad, raping or attempting to assault every rail stop and town along the line, as far west as Tucson!”⁴ Nor were they the only undesirables in the region. Cattle thieves, both Anglo and Hispanic, ranged throughout Arizona and New Mexico, many of them under the control of John Kinney.⁵ “If ever banditti were accused of disrupting a young economy, the highwaymen of Arizona Territory from 1877 to 1882 earned that distinction.”⁶ These thieves and killers provided the basis of the “Cowboy Curse.”

One writer suggested that a statement in the *Tombstone Epitaph* contains the first evidence of the Cowboy Curse.⁷ The article states that during the term of Democrat Hugh Farley as

district attorney “there have been more than thirty homicides committed and crimes of all classes have been of frequent occurrence in Pima County.”

Quite a number of cattle thieves have been bound over to appear before the Grand Jury, and they have not appeared, and the Grand Jury left in ignorance of the evidence against them. There are cases where indictments have been made against cattle thieves and receivers of stolen cattle and the indicted persons have not even been assigned and the indictments left to slumber in the pigeon holes of the clerk’s office until time and dust have hidden them from view.⁸

The Republican *Epitaph* added:

We understand that the Grand Jury brought in indictments the other day against two Mexicans, and when the cases were called in court the witnesses who had appeared before the jury were nowhere to be found, having probably packed up and started for the Magdalena feast. It appears to us that about enough of this kind of business has been going on in Pima County. Men are shot in the streets and the killers are turned loose because no evidence is brought before the Grand Jury to indict them; men are found dead in various places and a newspaper item is all that is known of the matter; indictments are found and no witnesses are at hand to convict.⁹

What is obvious is that neither Clum nor the Republican Party were attacking Farley’s public record in a pre-election editorial. The real message is vote Republican!

The so-called Cowboy Curse was established long before John Ringo, the “King of the Cowboys,” arrived in Arizona. Governor John C. Fremont reported in January 1879 that Robert Martin, alias Dutch Martin, was leading a band of outlaws numbering around a hundred.¹⁰ Regardless of how many men Martin commanded, in 1879 he was one of the most notorious outlaws in Arizona, before Ringo entered the territory.

In 1876 and 1877 Martin surfaced in New Mexico charged with “Dutch Joe” Hubert for stage robbery.¹¹ During the Lincoln County War he and Jesse Evans were suspected of a number of crimes. Martin, a Kinney gang member like Pony Diehl and Bill Bresnahan alias Curly Bill Brocius, was probably part of the army that descended on San Elizario in late 1877 at the climax of the El Paso Salt War.¹² In 1878 Martin and Bill Bresnahan attacked a government ambulance commanded by Lieutenant Benjamin Butler near El Paso. Butler drove them off but the soldiers with him were both shot.

The outlaws were captured and convicted, but escaped from Ranger custody within two weeks of the enlistment of Sherm McMaster, a Kinney gang member linked closely to Diehl.¹³ Martin apparently spent the next few years in Mexico and New Mexico stealing livestock before arriving in Arizona where he operated out of the San Simon Valley. Following Martin’s death, Bob Paul, with no reason to defend any of the oft-named and never proven Cowboys, testified in January 1881:

Q. Are you familiar with the lower part of the San Simon Valley?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Is it not a fact that it was noted as the headquarters of the cow-boys?

A. It used to be, *but not now*. [emphasis added]¹⁴

Paul’s unbiased testimony is clear evidence that “the Cowboys” were not operating out of the San Simon region even while the traditional cowboys had settled there.

The reference to Martin’s gang as “cowboys” demonstrates the indiscriminate use of the term. E. B. Pomroy, the US Attorney for Arizona Territory, reported to US Attorney General Wayne MacVeagh, “Cow-boys is a generic designation, originally applied to Cow drivers and herders in Western Texas, but the name has been corrupted in the Territories of New Mexico

and Arizona and its local significance includes the lawless element that exists upon the border, who subsist by rapine plunder and highway robbery, and whose amusements are drunken orgies and murder.”¹⁵

The term Cowboys (or Cow Boys) was corrupted long before 1879. As early as 1842 Texas settler John J. Linn wrote: “In Victoria at that time was a company of organized bandits and cut-throats called ‘the Cow Boys,’ whose leader was one Wells. Among the number was that cold-blooded assassin, Mabry Gray, whose fiendish atrocities furnished the imagination of Hon. Jere Clements, of Alabama, the material for the mock-heroic fiction known once, but now happily scarce, as ‘Mustang Gray.’”¹⁶

The designation took hold, particularly among Easterners and townsmen unfamiliar and unconcerned with the livestock trade. C. M. Chase made similar statements on November 27, 1881, at Deming, New Mexico.

But the Indians are not the worst element in Grant county society. The cow boys, or roughs and thieves, are so numerous that no man ventures any distance from the village without his Winchester rifle, ready to repeat 12 or 16 times without reloading. With this element constantly on the watch for plunder, a man’s life goes for naught. . . . Three weeks ago a cow boy rode his horse defiantly over the depot hotel platform, and was about to ride into the dining room when he dropped off his horse with a charge of buckshot in his back.¹⁷

The term was used to tarnish reputations. “The word ‘Cowboy’ had a sinister meaning. Republicans used it as a label for Democratic opponents whether or not they engaged in nefarious practices.”¹⁸

Nor were Cowboys a preoccupation of Earp partisan George W. Parsons in 1880: “Don’t think I’ll tramp it again unarmed. Colonel L [Lewis] says a Mexican might go for a fellow or Indian pop down.”¹⁹ While Parsons was concerned about Mexicans and Indians, he seems unaware of the dangers of Cowboys. This revealing statement documents the reality of the border.

The problems dated back to conflicts between Mexico and the United States. Regardless of the rights and wrongs on both sides, the United States ended up with large areas of land that had once belonged to Mexico. Understandably disenfranchised Hispanic citizens sought to reclaim what was taken. There were many patriotic men on the border, but these were eclipsed by numerous Mexican bandits, men who raided and killed on both sides of the border from California to Texas.

Between 1877 and 1882 at least thirty-six stage holdups occurred in Arizona, many of them committed by Mexican bandits who fled to Sonora.²⁰ The international border provided easy access to sanctuary and encouraged criminals of both countries to raid across the line. Cattle theft and smuggling were prevalent. On the American side men such as Bob Martin and John Kinney, the King of the Rustlers, added to border tensions. The primary concern in Arizona was Mexican bandits.

The harsh reality of the US-Mexican border centered upon the fact that it was and remains impossible to control. The issue of dealing with Mexican bandits has existed far longer and was more serious than any “Cowboy Curse.” Yet the reality is largely ignored by those intent on maintaining the “Cowboy Curse” folklore.

As early as September 8, 1858, Mexicans attacked four men constructing the Butterfield

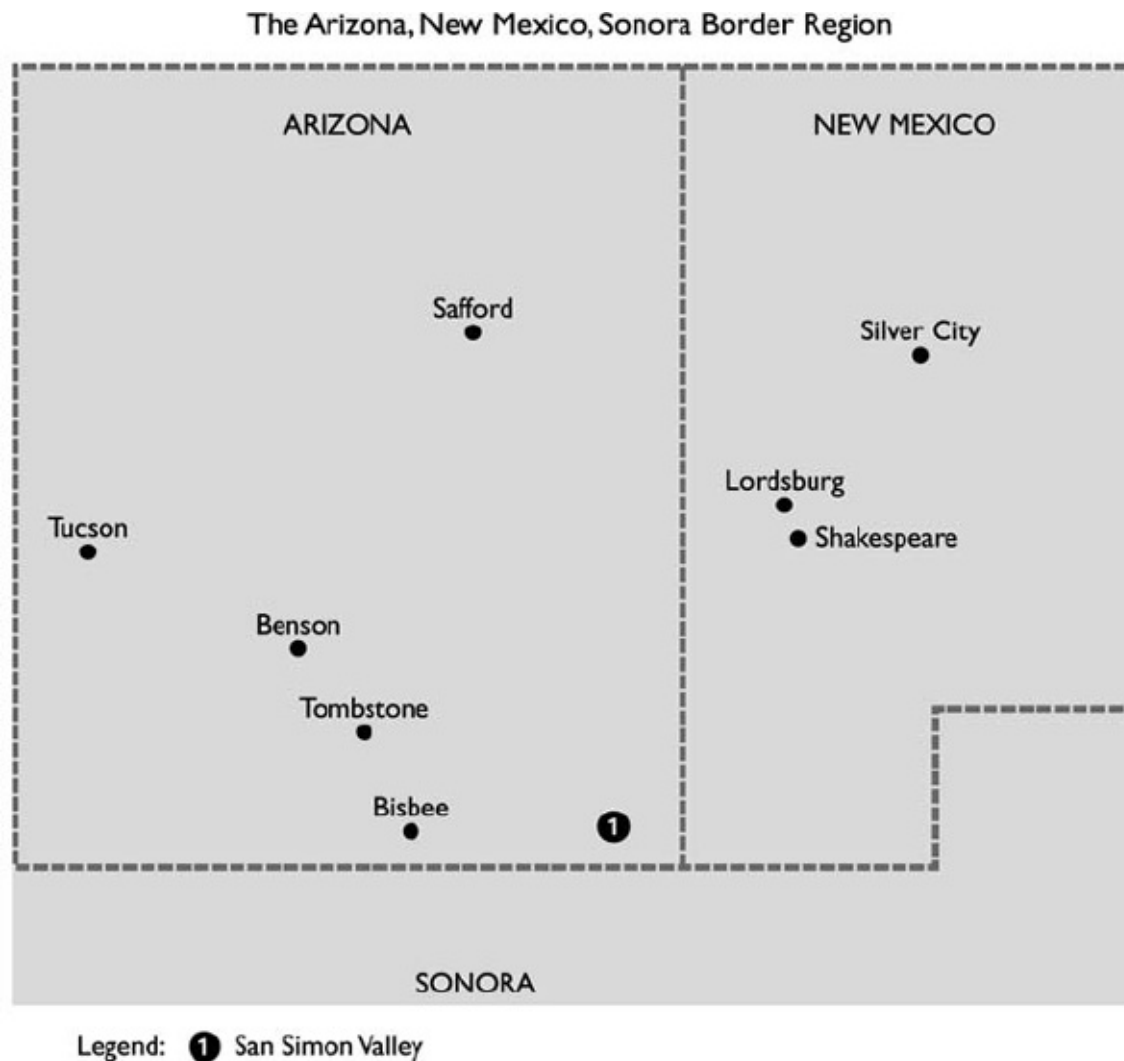
stage stop at Dragoon Springs and killed three of them.²¹ The incident was not the last. In California men like Joaquin Murietta and Tiburcio Vasquez “felt their race was victimized and their social rights abused by the ever increasing influx of the intolerant ‘gringo.’”²² In December 1875 federal troops from San Diego were ordered to the border to counter the threat of “a large gathering of Mexicans” along the line. It was believed “either a raid across the border or a revolution in Lower California is intended.”²³

In Texas, border troubles have been prevalent since the Texas War of Independence and persisted today. In 1873 the *Brenham Banner* reported “eighty robbers under one Ramon Rios have been organized in Tamaulipas to raid into Texas.”²⁴ Other newspapers report Mexican raiders striking deep into American territory during 1874–1875. Texas Ranger C. R. Perry reported that a band of “Indians or Mexicans” had crossed the San Saba River on August 19, 1874, on a raiding expedition. The German settlers had a fight with them along Honey Creek.²⁵ L. H. McNelly secured his reputation as a Texas Ranger battling raiders along the Rio Grande.²⁶ In 1878, Judge G. N. Garcia said of Juan Montez: “I think he could raise forty or sixty men, and think he could raise more men for an unlawful than a lawful purpose. I think he is a hardcase. His reputation is rather bad. He is accused of being a horse-thief and a cattle-thief. He steals whenever he can get a chance.”²⁷ The same year the US Army issued General Order No. 9 “relative to the crossing of United States troops into Mexico, in pursuit of marauders.” It stated “the parties, who have been committing the raids, are either bandits and enemies of civilization in both countries.”²⁸

The entire border from California to Texas suffered from these bandits. In 1871, the *Arizona Citizen* complained bitterly about bandits along the borders.²⁹ On September 4, 1875, Tucson reported that Sonora and other states in Mexico were “infested by bands of marauders and bandits.”³⁰

Nor were the atrocities that occurred in Mexico the sole responsibility of “Cowboys” or other Anglo outlaws as illustrated by Cirilo Gil’s fate. Gil was a “very hard-working and highly respected” man. Being illiterate did not deter him from seeking a better life. Through hard work he established a ranch known as Barragan seventy miles southwest of San Juan Iscaquixtla. In 1869 two bandit leaders, Camilo Bravo and Paulino Noriega, attacked the ranch with between eighty and ninety men. Following a bloody shootout that left a number of bandits and defenders dead, Gil was abducted from the house with one of his sons. The old man had been shot in the head, but the bandits attempted to keep him alive so they could obtain ransom. Infuriated when the old man died, Bravo had Noriega killed.³¹ Incidents such as this continued well into the 1920s. “The ones [Mexicans] we had to watch for were the ‘proscriptos’ (outlaws) or ‘red flaggers,’ as we called those who used Chihuahua as their headquarters.”³²

During the summer of 1878, Crawley P. Dake was appointed US marshal for Arizona Territory. Dake began well, and the *Arizona Miner* praised his attempts to extradite criminals from Mexico. Cooperation was short lived. In December the Mexican government complained about Anglo outlaws who had stolen some Mexican cattle. Governor John C. Fremont riposted by first denying the charges and then accusing Mexico of allowing bandits to use Sonora as a base.



The Arizona, New Mexico, Sonora border region. *Courtesy author's collection.*

Another brutal assault occurred on September 2, 1878. Deputy US Marshals Cornelius Finley³³ and J. H. Adams³⁴ were killed and robbed while hunting stage robbers. The bandits fled to Sonora where five of them were captured by Mexican authorities. Arizona officials forwarded an extradition request, but in 1879 “the Mexican government notified Arizona authorities that the extradition request was denied.” The killers’ fate remains unknown.³⁵

At times bandits leaders graced themselves with the title of revolutionaries. In 1880 the leading outlaw along the Arizona border was Brigido Reyes. Reyes busied himself making life miserable for both Mexican and American citizens. On August 28, 1880, a correspondent signing himself “Occasional” told how Reyes had seized the principal men in the town of Magdalena and held them for a ransom of \$10,000. The bandit chieftain, who styled himself “Colonel” Reyes, finally settled for \$4,000.

“Coronel” Brigido claims to belong to a party—that of Marques or Ramirez; he proclaims a plan; but no party political claims him. People only know him by the plan he acts upon—that of highway robbery; nor does anybody here believe that the proclamation of any plan, promising as it may be, transforms a brigand to a patriot.³⁶

Reyes frequently popped across the border to raid. Acting Governor John J. Gosper confirmed in mid-1881 that Mexicans had perpetrated most “cowboy depredations” up to that time.³⁷

Governor Luis Torres of Sonora willingly cooperated in removing this thorn from his flesh, and by August Reyes and his gang were on the run. On August 14, 1880, Mexican troops attacked Reyes and his men between Tubutama and Puente, killing a number of outlaws. Reyes fled across the border with Mexican troops in pursuit. He was overtaken at Doctor Wilbur's ranch near Arivaca. After the stockman refused to surrender the outlaws, the Mexican force withdrew. The citizens of Arivaca finally managed to arrest nine of the bandits, but Reyes escaped with five others.

Sheriff Charles Shibell dispatched Deputy Butner to capture Reyes, and on August 18 Butner caught up with the elusive bandit. A gun battle erupted in which one of Reyes' men was killed. "A posse of men are now on the trail of the remaining fugitives, and although up to the time of going to press no news had been received by Sheriff Shibell, it would seem as though Brigidio Reyes and the balance of his murderous gang of cutthroats and horse thieves are about to receive such a check as will deter any future foolhardy and marauding raids into our neighboring state of Sonora."³⁸

The pursuit of Reyes was heated. Parsons noted "Part of a Cavalry Company under Lieutenant Carter in town this a.m. after some Mexican bandits and horse thieves."³⁹ The *Nugget* added, "A party of soldiers were in town from Camp Huachuca Tuesday hunting for the Mexican bandit, Brigidio Reyes. It is unnecessary to state that they didn't find him."⁴⁰

The *Arizona Citizen* reported:

The CITIZEN Monday received a call from United States Marshall C. P. Dake, who arrived on Sunday morning from Prescott. Mr. Dake is here to investigate the circumstances connected with the late raid of Brigidio Reyes and his gang into Sonora, and he informs us that it is the intention of the Government to not only prosecute and severely punish, if possible, the participants in the late fiasco, but to take such measures as will make any future demonstrations of the kind very hazardous. The Government is thoroughly aroused to the importance of suppressing these marauding expeditions, and no pains will be spared to prevent them in the future.⁴¹

The *Star* added, "U. S. Marshall [sic] Evans has returned from his chase after Reyes. He followed him to the Sonora border first. Reyes then re-entered Arizona and was again pursued till he entered the State of Chihuahua where he is now supposed to be. The soldiery were still near the border when Mr. Evans left and will probably be away another four days."⁴²

On September 11 a gang member named Martinez was captured. Reyes again eluded capture, and for some time the pursuit continued with local and federal authorities on both sides of the border cooperating fully. Such was not always the case.

Also terrorizing the area were the Apaches, probably the best guerrilla fighters of all time and certainly men with far better reason to be "on the prod" than either Mexican bandits or Anglo outlaws. Under the leadership of such men as Victorio, Juh, and Geronimo they struck swiftly, and no accurate figure can be assigned to either the number of people they killed or the livestock they carried off. Much of the problem resulted from the government's shortsightedly forcing the Apaches onto the San Carlos reservation, which Britton Davis dubbed "Hell's Forty Acres."

Rain was so infrequent that it took on the semblance of a phenomenon when it came at all. Almost continuously dry, hot, dust and gravel-laden winds swept the plain, denuding it of every vestige of vegetation. In summer a temperature of 110° in the shade was cool weather. At all other times of the year flies, gnats, unnamable bugs,—and I was about to say "beasts of the air"—swarmed in millions. Curiously, in the worst heat of the summer most of the flies disappeared; left, evidently, for the

mountain resorts.⁴³

The agency was usually administered by corrupt Indian agents who robbed both beef contractors and Indians to line their own pockets. The Apaches were not criminals, but their presence added further to the danger along the border. The situation can be summed up simply. “Crime has become the leading growth industry along the border.”⁴⁴

“and a stray cat”

RINGO WAS ALREADY FACING a charge of assault with intent to commit murder. The shooting in November was inexcusable. A March 11 entry in the docket books notes, “On motion of Hugh Farley, Esq., Dist. Atty. It was ordered that as Deft. Had failed to appear during this session of the Grand Jury that his Bond be, and this same is hereby declared forfeited, and that a Bench Warrant be issued for the arrest of said Deft.”¹

Ringo did have good cause for not appearing, however, and made a serious attempt to prevent the bond’s forfeiture. On March 3, 1880, he wrote to Sheriff Charles Shibbel from the San Simon Valley, New Mexico:

Dear Sir, being under Bond for my appearance before the Grand jury of Pima Co., I write to let you know why I can not appear—I got shot through the foot and it is impossible for me to travel for awhile[.] [I]f you get any papers for me, and will let me know, I will attend to them at once as I wish to live here. I do not wish to put you to any unnecessary trouble, nor do I wish to bring extra trouble on myself. Please let the Dist-Atty know why I do not appear, for I am very anxious that there is know [sic] forfeiture taken on the Bond.²

Some authors argue that the letter demonstrates Ringo shot himself in the foot.³ But Ringo could have been shot in any number of ways, and “the letter provides no explanation concerning how Ringo was shot or whether the wound was self-inflicted. What the letter does state is Ringo’s wish to live in Arizona.”⁴ The disposition of his bond is unknown. Information in the *Tombstone Epitaph* suggests the case itself was compromised. Commenting on this, the *Nugget* responded in part that “Another count in this cheerful arraignment is that one person charged with assault to murder permitted to withdraw a plea of not guilty and plead guilty to a simple assault, fined twenty dollars by the district court with no alternative of imprisonment.”⁵ This may be a reference to Ringo shooting Hancock although this remains uncertain.

John Ringo had arrived dramatically in Arizona. Contemporary accounts indicate his reputation, fueled by secondhand stories, confused, garbled accounts, gossip and exaggeration, had swollen out of proportion to reality. Walter Noble Burns traveled to Tombstone and interviewed some of the old timers in the area. He later wrote that Ringo’s brother was killed in a range war and in revenge he hunted down the three murderers and killed them.⁶ One Ringo biographer charges that Burns’ account was “totally without source, derivation, or even suggestion,” but this is only partially correct.⁷ Burns’ story, a succinct account of the Hoo Doo War, did not originate with Ringo or anyone involved in the feud. If Burns or an informant mistakenly substituted Ringo’s name for that of John Baird, the recollection becomes clear. The “John” in the story refers to John Baird, not Ringo, who hunted down those he considered responsible for his brother’s death. There were many Johns involved in the feud, including Baird, Faris, Olney, Strickland, Clymer, Ringo, and Cavin, and the confusion and transfer of

the story to Ringo is understandable. It was such stories that fueled Ringo's reputation. One former stagecoach driver recalled, "Never heard of Ringo killing an American in this part of the country but have often heard that there was a fude [*sic* : feud] in Texas called the 'Ringo War' and that he had killed twenty two men."⁸ Many believed such tales.

Ringo was back on his feet a month later. On April 2 he and one M. C. Blakely sold "an undivided two thirds 2/3 in the Blakely Mining Claim situated in the San Simon Mining District" for one thousand dollars. The document was notarized by William R. Brown and witnessed by J. W. Evensen and John R. Phillips at Shakespeare, New Mexico.⁹ On April 7, Ringo again appeared before Brown and appointed James B. Price of Jefferson City, Missouri, to sell "the entire interest in the Sydney Johnson Mine," stipulating that Price accept no less than \$2,000 until October 7, 1880. Anything Price obtained in excess of that amount was his to keep.¹⁰

In late April or early May, Ringo sold a horse to another possible source of misinformation about his Texas activities, a young Texan going under the alias of Billy Grounds. Grounds, born Arthur DeCloud Burtcher in Blanco County, Texas, on November 26, 1862, was the son of Michael Eugene Burtcher and Sarah Ann Kegans. He had fled Texas, possibly with the Slaughter herds, due to some unidentified trouble and adopted the name William Grounds.¹¹ Grounds' letter to his mother dated May 4 communicates his awe for Ringo. "Ma I got two horses. I bought one the other day and paid \$65.00 for him. I got him from John Ringo the man that was with Scott Cooley that time up at Scold [*sic* : Cold] Springs."¹²

During the spring of 1880 Joe Olney drove a herd of cattle from his Mexican ranch to San Simon to fatten them for market. That summer he, Ringo, George Turner, and Ike Clanton drove the herd to the San Carlos Indian reservation where they received a firsthand lesson in doing business with corrupt Indian agents.

Indian Agent J. C. Tiffany had arrived at the post in 1879. At first he had organized Sunday schools and Bible classes, but his hand quickly turned to less Christian pursuits, such as signing for supplies that were never received and other criminal activities. Tiffany managed to establish a successful ranch at the Apaches' expense and at one point during 1880 even wrote to the Tucson firm of Lord and Williams brazenly asking them to send a clerk to the agency in order to make their books agree with his.

The outcome of any dealings with Tiffany or his cronies was predictable. J. B. Collins' July 17, 1880, letter to B. M. Jacobs shows how the men fared:

I write to ask you to use your influence in getting the parties who tried to wreck your property this week, and who insulted and endangered the lives of your employees at doings as I learn them partly from your brother and others. Joe Hill, who they call their King Pin, Dutch Gingo [*sic*] and Ike Clanton carried about \$1,500 or \$2,000.00 worth of cattle to the San Carlos. It seems that the contractor found out that these cattle came into San Simon without paying duty, and he caused them much trouble as he would not purchase until he heard from the Gov officer at Silver City who has jurisdiction over that section. I expect N[e]wton [identity uncertain, but probably the clerk] made a point on this and got the cattle low of them, which angered them very much. Th[e]y got here about the 12th and after shooting in Detry's house a few times, they paid me a visit and shot a couple of times. I took Clanton's pistol away from him & told him and his Dutch friend if the[y] made any more brakes [*sic*] I would use my shotgun on them. So they concluded that Safford was a better field for their operations. They reached there in due time and commenced operations by shooting the lamps in John Harrison's Saloon and shooting through Mr. Bill Kirkland's house. They opened up in Franklin's store. Shot at everything they fancied, made your brother pour out drinks which they would stir with the muzzle of their pistol. Tried to compel Mr. Wickersham to dance for them by pulling a pistol on him, but it was left for them to have their jolliest time by shooting fifty shots into your mill & make your employees furnish the cartridges. They made Katz shut off the water and then compelled him to get up in a corner with a lot of

Mexicans and not leave on pain of being shot, and they wanted to know of Joe Cottrall which one of the party he wished them to kill. Hill the King Pin and Clanton left for Solomon's where they said they were to have another jollification, and they have Turner under arrest waiting for the return of the J. P.

Now there are but 4 of these fellows all told and it is too bad that they cannot get put through, and I think you have the cause & power to do it. I could not get a single man here to help me arrest them, but I am good for all four of them here. I trust you will see fit after due enquiry to get the Sheriff to send & bring the gang into Tucson and have them put through. It will be a God's blessing for this Vall[e]y to get rid of them. You must excuse this long letter, for I feel like if young Katz was my brother I would not let up on them while the law could reach them.¹³

Conflicting interpretations of the Collins letter have been advanced. One writer suggests that the cattle were obtained "without the technicality of purchase" although Collins makes no such implication.¹⁴ While they may or may not have paid the duty on the cattle, neither Collins nor the contractor accused them of bringing in stolen beef, a charge far more serious than hurraing Maxey and Safford. Newton made the best of a profitable circumstance. Another writer, apparently ignorant of the tradition of hurraing towns at the end of cattle drives, considered the antics a typical amusement of Ike Clanton and his friends.¹⁵ One Earp biographer allows the possibility that the cattle were stolen, but pointed out that delaying drovers with fine points of the law was a typical pressure tactic that beef contractors used to get cattle at a lower price.¹⁶ It is likely the men wanted "to blow off some steam."¹⁷

Had the participants been anyone other than Ringo and his friends, the letter would be a mere curiosity of early Arizona history. Writing of cowboys in general, Philip Ashton Rollins stated that such incidents "represented little more than youthful prankishness, and an egotistical desire by passing punchers from distant regions to impress the local inhabitants with the fact of the visitor's presence."¹⁸ Ascribing the event more significance than warranted is indicative of the predetermined agenda some bring to the Cochise County troubles of the early 1880s.

A recollection left by one participant in the affair must also be addressed. A. M. Franklin, the storekeeper whose business was shot up during this episode, recalled Ringo in later years. "I knew John Ringo very well. . . . He saved my life several times."¹⁹

Sometime during 1880 Ringo made a trip to California to visit his sisters who wrote, "He visited us in San Jose in 1880 and was a fine upright gentleman."²⁰ While the exact time has not been determined, logic places this visit after the San Carlos incident. How long he was absent from Arizona is unknown, but he was back by the end of August when the hunt for Mexican bandit Reyes was in full force. Also of undetermined date were charges filed against Ringo and Ben Schuster. What they were involved in is unknown.²¹

As Reyes was being hunted down, more mundane matters occupied John Ringo's attention. "For two days at the end of August 1880, John Ringo was at Tucson for the Democratic County Convention."²² Ringo and James Speedy were selected as delegates for the San Simon Cienga district.²³ Present at the convention was James Hayes, brother-in-law of Louis Hancock. Ringo's selection was objected to, not because he had shot Hancock, but because he had no residence in Arizona. The Democratic Committee considered the matter and recommended admission.²⁴ In October the Pima County Board of Supervisors named John Ringo, Ike Clanton, and A. H. Thompson among others as election officials for the precinct. The Nugget reported the officials of Precinct 27 as "J. C. Clanton, Inspector; John Ringo and A. H. Thompson, judges." It was at first decided that the polling place would be at Joe Hill's home.²⁵ Later in

the month the Board of Supervisors ordered “the polling place be changed from the house of Joe Hill to that of J. Magill” due to concerns that Hill’s ranch might be in Mexico rather than Arizona.²⁶ The Board also removed Ringo and others as polling officials “there being some doubt whether the persons so appointed are residents of Arizona.”²⁷

On November 1, 1880, a day prior to the election, John Ringo was in New Mexico with Ike Clanton. He and Clanton appeared in Shakespeare, New Mexico, to file a ranch claim.

NOTICE

Know all men by these presents that We the undersigned have this day located for grazing and farming purposes 320 three hundred and twenty acres of land lying in what is called Animas Valley located about five miles West of the Animas Mountains about 28 Miles North of the Gaulupa Canon at the mouth of a cienga running into the Maur Valley from the West, and shall be known as the Alfalfa Ranch or Cienga this the first day of November A. D. 1880.

John Ringo
J. I. Clanton

Witness
W. J. Patrick
Fr. K. Johnson

Less than a month later, on November 26, Fanny Fern Ringo married Frank Moses Jackson in San Jose, California.²⁸

The Pima County election took place on November 2, 1880, and it appeared that John Ringo had played a role. With obvious good humor, James C. Hancock reported:

In this election Charlie Shibell and Bob Paul were both running for the office of Sheriff of Pima County, and the Rustlers that were operating in the county and along the Mexican border at that time, did not want Bob to win the election, so on the morning of election day, John Ringo, Curley Bill, Milt and Billy Hicks, Joe Hill and a few others rode into the little station of San Simon—now quite a thriving city on the Southern Pacific Railroad, and took possession of the voting precinct and all of them preceded to vote, and to make sure that none had been left out or overlooked, they voted several times over again; then they got all the white people of the little place—men, women, and children, probably eight or ten in all—and voted them in the same manner, then they rounded up the Chinese and Mexican section hands and voted them two or three times over, then they voted all their horses and a dog or two and a stray cat, and finally to make sure no one had been neglected and not given a chance to cast his ballot, they voted every one over again. When the returns began to come into Tucson, Bob took the lead and was quite a few votes ahead of Charlie, but when San Simon was heard from Charlie suddenly shot ahead in the count and Bob was completely “snowed under” by an overwhelming majority.²⁹

Other early Arizona residents noted this amusing anecdote, among them John P. Gray, C. D. Reppy, and Henry Morgan.³⁰ Shibell was reelected sheriff by a vote of 1,726 to 1,684 for Paul. The Republican *Epitaph* cried foul.

NO INTIMIDATION

At the recent election 104 votes were cast at San Simon precinct, 103 of which were Democratic. The odd vote is said to have been cast by a Texas cowboy, who, when questioned as to why he was voting the Republican ticket said: “Well, I want to show these fellows that there wasn’t any intimidation at this precinct.”³¹

Writers with a predetermined agenda accept this folktale as proof that Curly Bill Brocius stuffed the ballot box to insure Pima County’s sheriff was pro-Cowboy. Actually the entire story is humorous fiction. Curly Bill was not in San Simon during the election. He was in jail, having been arrested in Tombstone on October 28 for the killing of City Marshal Fred White.³²

On December 18, Republican candidate Bob Paul filed an appeal with the district court in Tucson claiming fraud in San Simon and other voting districts.³³ James K. Johnson, a witness

for Paul, testified, “there were not more than fifteen persons present (at the balloting) the whole day.” Johnson further testified that the ballots had been left in the hands of Phin Clanton for a time, and added that “the election was first intended to be held at Clanton’s, but when Clanton returned from Tucson he said there was a doubt of his house being in Arizona, and the polling place was changed to McGill’s house.”³⁴ According to some writers the “Cowboy” Clantons were desperate and lawless men, yet Johnson, who knew them, says they were concerned that the election would be illegal if their home were on Mexican soil—so concerned, in fact, that they had the polling place moved to another location demonstrably inside the territory. Johnson was obviously unaware of the Clantons’ “lawlessness.” Neither he nor any of the officials saw anything wrong with Phin Clanton having custody of the ballots. Not one witness mentioned the voting of every canine in the San Simon Valley, let alone a stray cat. On the contrary, the Republican representative testified, “The election was conducted all right so far as I could see.”³⁵

Judge Charles French ruled in favor of Paul on January 29, 1881, throwing out the entire San Simon vote and some of the ballots from other locations. Shibell appealed the ruling.

If the Cowboys did not stuff the ballot box, who did? Local Wells Fargo agent Marshall Williams testified that the returns from San Simon were kept in his office in Tombstone and that the seal he had put on the box had been broken. More than any other cause, that evidence cast doubt on the election returns from San Simon. It is not impossible that Paul’s own partisans broke into the ballot box, as they were to do in the election of 1884 when Paul’s election was questioned. At that time Paul and some of his friends raided the Wells Fargo office in Tucson and changed the ballot in his favor.³⁶ Nor is it impossible that Democrats in Tombstone tampered with the returns.

Finally, contrary to folklore, the San Simon vote was not the only polling place under investigation. Even Tombstone’s count was questioned. The San Simon ballots were thrown out for a number of reasons, none of which involved voting livestock. The *Star* published the election’s final outcome in April 1881. “The vexed question is settled. The shrievalty contest is ended. Chas. A. Shibell yesterday vacated the office of Pima county, turning over to his successor, R. H. Paul the books, papers, etc., of the office. As long as there was a probability of a final decision in his favor, Mr. Shibell very properly contested the right of his successor to the office; but when it became evident to him that the ultimate success of Paul was assured, he yielded possession immediately.”³⁷ By that time Cochise County had been formed out of a large portion of Pima County.

Overlooked in this election scandal is the fact that Ike Clanton was elected justice of the peace in the San Simon with Joe Hill as constable.³⁸ The judge’s ruling not only decided in favor of Paul but effectively nullified the election of Clanton and Hill, postponing any political ambitions that they and anyone else had until the first scheduled Cochise County election in November 1882.³⁹ The decision did benefit John Ringo. Judge French also ordered that all cases that had originated in what became Cochise County were to be transferred to Cochise County’s district court.⁴⁰ Three days later a notation appeared in a Tucson paper that a decision not to prosecute Ringo had been entered.⁴¹

On November 26, Ringo was back in Grant County, New Mexico, where he filed his claim

on the Alfalfa Ranch.⁴² Paul's end-of-year appeal was typical of party politics of the day, intensified by the animosities that had smoldered between Republicans and Democrats since the end of the Civil War. Tombstone was divided along party lines, and the controversy that has persisted until the present day was soon to ignite in a fireball of lies, theft, and murder.

“as well known as Satan himself”

THE YEAR 1880 CLOSED in a cloud of political scandal. Those who would influence John Ringo's life had all arrived in what became Cochise County. Few would escape the heated controversy surrounding the history of the region. It is now that John Ringo emerges, at least in folklore, as a “crime lord.”¹ This transformation is central to the controversy surrounding Wyatt Earp.

Writers dealing with this period (roughly from 1880 through 1882) generally oversimplify the situation, dividing the factions along party lines, Republicans versus Democrats. Despite the abundant contemporary accounts of Mexican bandits and Apache depredations, the so-called “Cowboy Curse” still dominates Tombstone and has all but obliterated those harsh realities from the historical record. Earp sympathizers cite the Republican *Epitaph* and a series of documents in the National Archives known as Record Group 60 as proof that the Cowboy Curse was real. More than one author has cited the journal of George W. Parsons, an early Tombstone diarist, John Clum, controversial editor of the *Epitaph*, Acting Governor John J. Gosper, and Clara Spalding Brown as unbiased witnesses while defaming, even criminalizing, those opposed to the Earps. Many contemporary writers suggest the existence of a gang of Cowboys (Anglo outlaws) ranging from 180 to 300 men.

One historian who attempted to cast the history of the area in more balanced terms was the late Ed Bartholomew. The first to provide a biography of Wyatt Earp in less than flattering terms, he was attacked as a “debunker” or “Earp basher” when his two-volume biography first appeared in the 1960s. Bartholomew did not deny the presence of a gang or gangs of outlaws in Cochise County during the 1880s, but pointed out that Mexican bandits caused many of the problems and that the various newspapers of the time used the term “Cowboy” indiscriminately.²

Other historians concur. “The most unfortunate aspect of this Cowboy outbreak was that the newspapers failed to distinguish the common hardworking drovers from the outlaw ‘Cowboys.’”³ “The word ‘Cowboy’ had a sinister meaning. Republicans used it to label Democratic opponents whether or not they engaged in nefarious practices.”⁴ “To many townsfolk, those who chose to live outside the community, being from the south and a Democrat automatically made a man a cowboy and thus a rustler.”⁵

Chief among those charged with cattle theft, robbery, and mass murder were the Clanton family headed by Newman Clanton. Of Newman Clanton one noted historian laconically remarks that modern writers present a picture of a man who “was as well known as Satan himself.”⁶ Newman Haynes Clanton was born in Davidson County, Tennessee, in 1816 to Henry and Polly Hailey Clanton. He moved to Missouri and on January 5, 1840, married

Mariah P. Kelso. The couple's first three children were born there: John Wesley in 1841, Phineas Fay in 1845, and Joseph Isaac (Ike) in 1847. A daughter, Mary E., was born in Illinois in 1852.

The Clantons moved to Texas in the early 1850s and settled near Dallas. There two more children, Hester and Alonzo, were born in 1854 and 1859 respectively.⁷ The family later moved to Hamilton County. Here, on June 15, 1861, Newman and John enlisted in Captain Wilbur F. Cotton's company of Home Guards. John also enlisted on August 10, 1861, in the Freestone Boys, Fourth Regiment, Texas Cavalry.⁸ This was not unusual. Some companies were quickly formed and as quickly disbanded.

John Wesley Clanton's military records indicate that he was arrested for desertion in late 1861 and court-martialed in February 1862. He was found guilty, but due to extenuating circumstances, specifically his youth and ignorance of the Articles of War, received a relatively light sentence: pay stoppage from the time of desertion until the end of his enlistment and then a dishonorable discharge.⁹ The youngest Clanton, William Harrison, was born in Texas in 1862.

Newman enlisted again on February 1, 1864, in the Company for the Second Frontier District. On June 28, 1864, he was detailed to drive cattle. One record lists him as absent without leave. The matter cannot have been serious as there is no record of any action being taken against him.¹⁰

After the war, the Clantons moved to California. Mariah Clanton died, probably in 1866, although the date is not certain. Young Alonzo Clanton also died during that time.¹¹ In California, John married Nancy Rose Kelsey and settled in Inyo County. Newman moved his family to Arizona during 1873 and settled in the Gila Valley.

Many writers point to the Clantons' arrival in Arizona as the beginning of their large-scale criminal depredations. One charges that Clanton was "one of the acknowledged leaders of the cowboy faction."¹² An Earp apologist states the Clantons "had a dirty little secret: they were cooperating with the backcountry rustlers on highly questionable cattle deals."¹³ Another writes "he [Newman] and his sons rustled and bought rustled stock."¹⁴ Doc Holliday's biographer adds "they enjoyed a mixed reputation almost from the beginning, as both reputable settlers and as parasites looking to profit from government contracts."¹⁵

These charges are typical of the lack of evenhandedness dominating Tombstone's history. The charge that ranchers were "parasites looking to profit from government contracts" would implicate such men as Colonel Henry Clay Hooker, a cattle baron cited as an Earp partisan. Hooker and his partner Hugh L. Hinds sought "to supply Arizona military posts and Indian agencies with beef and other essentials."¹⁶ "Competition for extended supply contracts was particularly intense. Some 135 Texans signed contracts to supply beef to the army between 1848 and 1860."¹⁷



Newman Haynes Clanton, “as well known as Satan himself.”
Courtesy Arizona Historical Society/Tucson, AHS 40882.

Most of these charges are offered without contemporary evidence. Large-scale criminal depredations could not escape the notice of a watchful press.

Newman H. Clanton and family settled on the Gila Valley a few miles above old Camp Goodwin August 3 of this year. He at once made claim to water, located a line and now has a ditch two and a half miles in length which carries 1880 cubic feet. There is one body of fully 25,000 acres of very rich land and Mr. Clanton feels sure that with proper management he has water enough to irrigate the whole tract. This year he has cultivated 100 acres and is now preparing and will sow and plant at least 600. He was in Tucson early this week procuring utensils and supplies. He says the settlement now consists of three families—in all fifteen persons, and that more are coming. He is very anxious to have families settle there so that a public school may be opened as soon as possible. Families will be supplied with a water privilege at the actual pro rata cost of the ditch, and accommodated with all information and assistance Mr. Clanton can afford. We have passed over the land and know it to be as rich as can be found anywhere. The water of the river is of first quality and the locality is very healthy so far as known. The settlement is near Camp Grant, not very far from Camps Apache and Bowie, and within reasonable distance of the important mining camp of Clifton. All these places must have much grain, vegetables and all sorts of farm and dairy products.¹⁸

Clanton’s “criminal activities” made news again in 1874.

All who live in the Gila valley, near old Camp Goodwin at Pueblo Viejo, are enthusiastic in their accounts of the richness of the soil and the ease with which a man may make a farm. N. H. Clanton gave us these items last week but after our paper was filled. About twelve months ago he moved to a point near old Camp Goodwin and about 160 miles north of east of Tucson, and within Pima county. The place is now called Clantonville. During the year he has been there, himself and three

sons have put a ditch from the Gila river, planted 120 acres with wheat, corn, barley and all kinds of vegetables; and from nothing of consequence to start with, now has a fine farm and plenty about him. All his crops have grown nicely and some of them unusually large. Portions of his corn grew to be twelve to fourteen feet high with two large ears on a stalk. It was so nearly matured two weeks ago that scarcely an ear could be obtained soft enough for table use. He reports grass plentiful and from five to six feet in height. The cattle are fat and everything is in a fine condition. All persons east or west who desire a very fine place to make a good home easily and cheaply cannot do better than to go into the Gila valley. Land is abundant at government price, and the public surveys will be extended there during the present year. Anyone desiring more detailed information can get it by addressing N. H. Clanton, Camp Grant, Arizona.¹⁹

In 1877 the Clantons moved from the Gila Valley and settled along the San Pedro River.²⁰ Undeterred by the lack of contemporary evidence, one writer states that Ike Clanton's "presumed posture of honest rancher falls short of truth, since he was a known rustler during much of his life."²¹ The *Tombstone Epitaph* reported on August 6, 1880:

FROM NEW MEXICO

From Mr. I. Clanton, who arrived in Tombstone yesterday from New Mexico, we learn that emigrants from Colorado, Texas and Kansas are rapidly coming into the Territory. The mines in the Victorio District are looking exceedingly well. A short time since a new camp known as San Simon, was opened, and from present indications, will soon eclipse any other in the Territory. The leads are large, averaging 125 ounces to the ton. The camp is located about eighty miles east of Tombstone. While at Fort Bowie, Mr. Clanton was informed on what he considered reliable authority that a portion of Victorio's band had returned to New Mexico and were present in the Black Range. He brought with him fifty head of beef cattle for the Tombstone market, being five days on the road from San Simon.

There is no hint that the cattle might have been stolen. The reality is that the Clantons were cattlemen.²² It is "impossible to find any evidence whatsoever in the contemporary record suggesting that Cochise County officials considered" Newman Clanton to be an outlaw.²³ In short, contemporary references to the Clantons' outlawry are conspicuous by their absence.

Also in the region was William Floyd Claiborne, another accused outlaw. Claiborne, the son of James C. and Ophelia Napier Claiborne, was born October 21, 1860, in either Alabama or Mississippi. He migrated west with the John H. Slaughter herds as a teenager where he "gained a reputation as a tenacious, steady, and dependable worker."²⁴ Viola Slaughter recalled that Claiborne saved John Slaughter's life from a bull when the cattle baron was thrown from his horse.²⁵ The 1880 census lists him as an assistant amalgamator living at Charleston.²⁶

Also identified by Earp enthusiasts as cattle thieves and killers were the McLaury brothers. Descended from an old New England family, Robert Huston McLaury, born August 3, 1811, at Kortright, New York, married Margaret Rowland in 1832. The couple had eleven children.²⁷ By 1855 they had resettled in Tama County, Iowa, where two "notorious outlaws," Robert Findley "Frank," born March 3, 1848, and Thomas Clark, born June 30, 1853, were raised on their father's farm. Their mother died in 1857, and until the early 1870s their father remained unwed. Then he married Anna Leigh, born around 1851. The older children were reportedly outraged and left Iowa. By the mid-1870s Frank and Tom McLaury had joined their brother Will in Fort Worth, Texas.²⁸ The brothers resettled in Arizona in 1877 prior to the founding of Tombstone. One historian concludes that there "are no voluminous court files and trial transcripts in which to read page after page about McLaury transgressions. They were never convicted of any crime."²⁹

One of Ringo's companions in the hurraing of Maxey, George W. Turner, is also identified

as a “Cowboy.” Little is known concerning Turner’s origins, but he is linked to Bob Martin and stock theft in November 1880, albeit not as his detractors would suggest. Under the banner “Horse and Cattle Thieves,” the *Arizona Weekly Star* reported:

From W. J. Crosby we received the following note:

SHAKESPEARE, N.M.

Nov. 25, 1880

EDITOR STAR:—During the past month a number of horses and mules have been stolen at intervals from various sections of this county, the latest being eight head from Leiterdorf, and several head from San Simon, in Pima county, fourteen head were stolen from the Stage Company at Mason’s ranch last week. A posse of San Simon ranchmen, consisting of Messrs. Turner, Marten [*sic* : Martin], Colt, Raymond and a Mexican named Dominguez, started in pursuit on Monday last following the trail to near Dowling’s ranch, and after a hard fight, lasting from daylight yesterday until three o’clock in the afternoon, they succeeded in killing one of the thieves, whose name is given as King, and seriously wounding another named Bill Smith. King was a cripple and leader of the gang, which were four in number. The posse captured 22 head of stock and returned with them. They will be well rewarded for this courageous action. They propose capturing the two remaining desperadoes and some 14 head of stock, known to have been stolen by the same gang.

This may be a useful lesson to horse and cattle thieves. Ropes and trees are very convenient in the neighborhood.³⁰

The party returned the stock to Turner and Lindeman’s ranch. Turner and Martin then “left for Shakespeare with four of the stolen stock belonging to Mr. Fitzgerald of that place.”³¹ They were unaware they had been pursued. On November 22, 1880, they were ambushed by four men identified as “Stiles, Leonard and King; the fourth being a stranger.”³² Leonard and King might have been Billy Leonard and Luther King.³³

This incident is largely ignored despite its importance. Turner is clearly described as a rancher by his contemporaries, not as an outlaw.³⁴ Breakenridge refers to Turner as “the banker for the rustlers,” a clear indication he was a Democrat.³⁵

Bill Smith, the wounded outlaw, is more commonly known in western history as Six-Shooter Smith. Born John Henry Hankins, he and others operated around Dodge City as early as 1878. In Dodge he was arrested for horse theft.³⁶ Smith migrated to Las Vegas in 1879 with other members of the loosely knit Dodge City Gang and soon proved himself a thorn in the flesh of New Mexican law officers. As the railroad headed southwest, Smith and several of the same ilk “settled” the railroad tank stop of Rio Mimbres. Smith nominated himself for deputy sheriff, a standard tactic of the gang. Sheriff Harvey Whitehill was not amused, rebuffing Smith due to his nasty tendency to terrorize the town, “shooting at people to see how close he could come without hitting them.”³⁷ He was “the big dog with the brass collar.”³⁸ Whitehill confronted Smith who “was gonna show some tricks with his six-shooter.” Smith commenced twirling his pistol, which fired, narrowly missing Whitehill’s son Wayne.³⁹ In late 1880 and early 1881 Smith “was a member of the gang of cowboys who terrorized the San Simon Valley.”⁴⁰

Smith was well known in his day. Surprisingly, while he was certainly one of the men raising hell along the border, he is not linked to the traditional Cowboys, perhaps because he is linked to Wyatt Earp through Doc Holliday. “Holliday’s history was further given as a partner of the notorious ‘Off Wheeler’ and ‘Six-shooter Smith,’ the latter of whom was killed about six weeks ago.”⁴¹

Wyatt Earp is credited with cleaning up organized outlawry in Arizona with his brothers and close friends, notably John Henry “Doc” Holliday, Sherman McMaster, Dan Tipton, Texas

Jack Vermillion and Turkey Creek Jack Johnson. Writers state that these men brought a reputation with them to Tombstone. They did indeed.

The Earps were the children of Nicholas Porter Earp and Virginia Ann Cooksey. Nicholas was married previously to Abigail Storm, but their son never went to Tombstone.⁴² Five of Nicholas and Virginia's children would play a role in Tombstone's history. James Cooksey Earp was born June 28, 1841, and Virgil Walter July 18, 1843, both in Ohio County, Kentucky. By 1848 the family was living in Monmouth, Illinois, where Wyatt Berry Stapp Earp was born on March 19, 1848. Morgan Seth (born April 24, 1851) and Warren Baxter (born March 9, 1855) first saw the light of day in Iowa. Between 1843 and 1864 Nicholas Earp moved a number of times. James Cooksey enlisted in the 17th Illinois Infantry in April 1861. He saw limited action, being severely wounded in his first battle at Frederickstown, Missouri, the musket ball passing "from behind the [left] shoulder through the joint coming out near the breast bone."⁴³ The wound left him permanently crippled. He was discharged at Lake Providence, Louisiana, March 22, 1863.⁴⁴ In 1864 James stopped in Austin, Nevada, the same town where John Ringo's mother had suffered a miscarriage. James Earp later went to Montana where he worked as a waiter at Deer Lodge.⁴⁵ According to his pension file, by 1873 he was in Illinois where he is said to have married Nellie Bartlett "Bessie" Ketchum on April 18. No record of any official marriage has been located.⁴⁶

Virgil Walter Earp's notoriety began when he eloped with Ellen Rysdam, marrying her on September 21, 1861. The marriage did not meet with his father's approval, and two weeks after the birth of his daughter in 1862 "Virgil hightailed it over the state line" to enlist in the Union Army, leaving his wife to face the wrath of both his and her parents alone.⁴⁷ Virgil enlisted in the 83rd Regiment of Illinois Volunteer Infantry.⁴⁸ While Virgil served in the Civil War, Nicholas Earp, possibly with the aid of Ellen's parents, informed her that Virgil had been killed in action.⁴⁹ The Rysdams and Ellen moved west before his return from the war.

Wyatt B. S. Earp, the most controversial brother, returned from California with his parents, settling in Lamar, Missouri. Here Wyatt married Urilla Sutherland on January 3, 1870. Three months later he was appointed constable and later that year ran for the position and won, "the only time he would ever run for office."⁵⁰ Within a year Urilla died under unknown circumstances. Her death prompted a street fight between her brothers, allied with the Brummett boys, against Wyatt, Virgil, James, and Morgan.⁵¹ Virgil Earp's biographer cites local tradition that Urilla's brothers held Wyatt responsible for her death, and "forced him out of town," an indication the manner of her death was not natural causes.⁵² After Wyatt left, James Cromwell charged that he paid Earp \$75 for a court execution but Wyatt changed the 7 to a 5 and pocketed \$20, big money in those days. Wyatt was charged with fraud, but he had fled to the Indian Territory.⁵³ Here he and Ed Kennedy got John Shown involved in transporting two stolen horses toward the Kansas border. The men were captured with Shown's wife Anna by a posse led by James Keys. Keys heard Earp threaten to kill Shown if he talked. Wyatt made bond in the amount of \$500, then ran rather than face justice at Fort Smith, Arkansas. A capias warrant was issued for his arrest.⁵⁴ By 1872 he was in Peoria, Illinois. Here on February 24, 1872, he was arrested for keeping and being found in a house of

ill fame. Later he was charged twice for running a floating brothel. With him was his “wife,” eighteen-year-old Sarah “Sallie” Haspel, whom he pimped as a prostitute.⁵⁵ “Conditions were ripe then and there for Wyatt Earp to pursue the profession he had chosen.”⁵⁶

By 1874 Earp had arrived in Wichita, Kansas, where he “piled up an impressive list of achievements during his tenure as a Wichita lawman.” In June his wife Sallie and James’ wife Bessie were arrested for keeping a whorehouse and jailed. Through the remainder of the year the Earp girls were fined routinely for the same offense, “an impressive list.”⁵⁷ Wyatt was finally appointed a policeman on April 21, 1875, and quickly collared a horse thief named W. W. Compton.⁵⁸ He served in this position until April 1876 when he attacked William Smith, a candidate for city marshal, without provocation. The *Weekly Beacon* reported that on April 2 Earp entered his room with “fight on the brain” and beat Smith for commenting that city marshal Mike Meagher would put Earp’s brothers on the police force if elected.⁵⁹ On May 22 the city council recommended Wyatt’s pay be withheld and that the vagrancy act be enforced against the Earps. Wyatt now abandoned his wife Sarah and took his third wife, Celia Ann “Mattie” Blalock, whom he began working as a prostitute.

Morgan Earp also acquired a wife in Kansas named Louisa Houston. Letters written by her indicate she was far from happy. Writing to her sister Agnes on March 5, 1880, from California Louisa noted, “I will have to live here now for some time for there is no way to make enough to get away.”⁶⁰ It appears Morgan also pimped his wife, and in a letter to her sister Kate she states, “My husband thinks you are a great deal better looking than me but I can’t see the point for I think I look very well to have weathered the storm I have during the past seven years. My face has held its own pretty well, but you can bet I have suffered death a thousand times and have often longed for it. Although I can never get well again, I have hopes of getting strong.”⁶¹ Obviously she had been forced into prostitution, a life she did not want. The Earps worked their wives as prostitutes while they gambled. Gamblers were accepted in respectable society, but contemporary newspapers had other thoughts for those who pimped their wives. “One of the Journal’s prints, Will T. McReight, took occasion yesterday afternoon to exhibit to the people of the west end the depth of degradation to which a man can fall by indulging in a street fight with the woman upon the wages of whose debasement he lives. An outsider interfered in the matter and as is usual in such cases got the worst of it, the woman turning upon him with a volley of abuse and then bursting into tears.”⁶²

Earp now joined the police force in Dodge City. News accounts indicate that he served satisfactorily during the summer of 1876. In July 1877 he was arrested for slapping prostitute Frankie Bell who had used abusive language to him.⁶³ The following year he was involved in the shooting of George Riddle Hoy, a young Texan whose family was involved in the Hoo Doo War. Hoy later died of his wound.⁶⁴ In early September 1879, following a party that involved throwing rotten eggs and generally having a good time in what was headlined “A Day of Carnival,” Wyatt resigned his position and left for Las Vegas, New Mexico.⁶⁵

At Las Vegas Earp was reunited with John Henry “Doc” Holliday and quickly assimilated into East Las Vegas “society,” characterized as “track followers, saloon dwellers, gamblers, dance hall operators; some were panderers, confidence men and even official and private

police officers!”⁶⁶ These included but were not limited to the loosely knit Dodge City Gang. The gang flourished briefly from 1879 until forced to leave after Michael Kelliher was killed by John Joshua Webb in February 1880. The leader of this criminal conglomerate was Hyman G. Neill, better known as Hoodoo Brown.⁶⁷

John Henry Holliday was born August 14, 1851 at Griffin, Georgia, to Henry Burroughs Holliday and Alice Jane McKey. Perhaps Wyatt Earp’s closest friend, Holliday was later called by him “my dear old comrade.”⁶⁸ Holliday had the advantages of a good family and in March 1872 received a degree in dentistry at the Pennsylvania College of Dental Surgery in Philadelphia.⁶⁹ From an early age he had shown a penchant for violence and racial hatred. On April 4, 1868, he was linked to a terrorist act when an explosion that rocked the Valdosta, Georgia, courthouse was detonated by Reconstruction resistance.⁷⁰ In 1873 he fled home after murdering some black children at a local swimming hole.⁷¹ Holliday continued his spiral downward in the gambling dens and whorehouses of the West. Late in 1873 he attacked Charles W. Austin in Dallas, Texas. Holliday was charged with intent to commit murder.⁷² On March 3, 1876, he apparently killed Private Jacob Smith at Fort Griffin, Texas, and fled.⁷³ In due course he found his way to Las Vegas, New Mexico, accompanied by his “wife,” prostitute Kate Fisher.⁷⁴ Here he ran with the Hoodoo Brown gang.

Citizens there did not trust him, and they had good reason for this sentiment. On July 19, 1879, a man named Mike Gordon was firing his pistol promiscuously in Las Vegas when someone shot him in the chest. Gordon died of the wound. At the time his killer went unidentified, but in 1881 the *Las Vegas Optic* identified Holliday as the killer.⁷⁵

Clearly, both Earp and Holliday had checkered careers prior to their arrival in Tombstone. Once they arrived in Tombstone, however, the leopards would all change their spots.

Or would they?

“John R. Godalmighty”

IF RINGO’S 1880 was largely unremarkable, others linked to him experienced an eventful year. Prior to arriving in Tombstone, Virgil Earp had obtained an appointment as a deputy US Marshal from Crawley P. Dake. Virgil was the only Earp with any official standing when the brothers reached Tombstone. That would change in time. In late July the *Epitaph* published a notice characterized as “a way to make some money.”¹

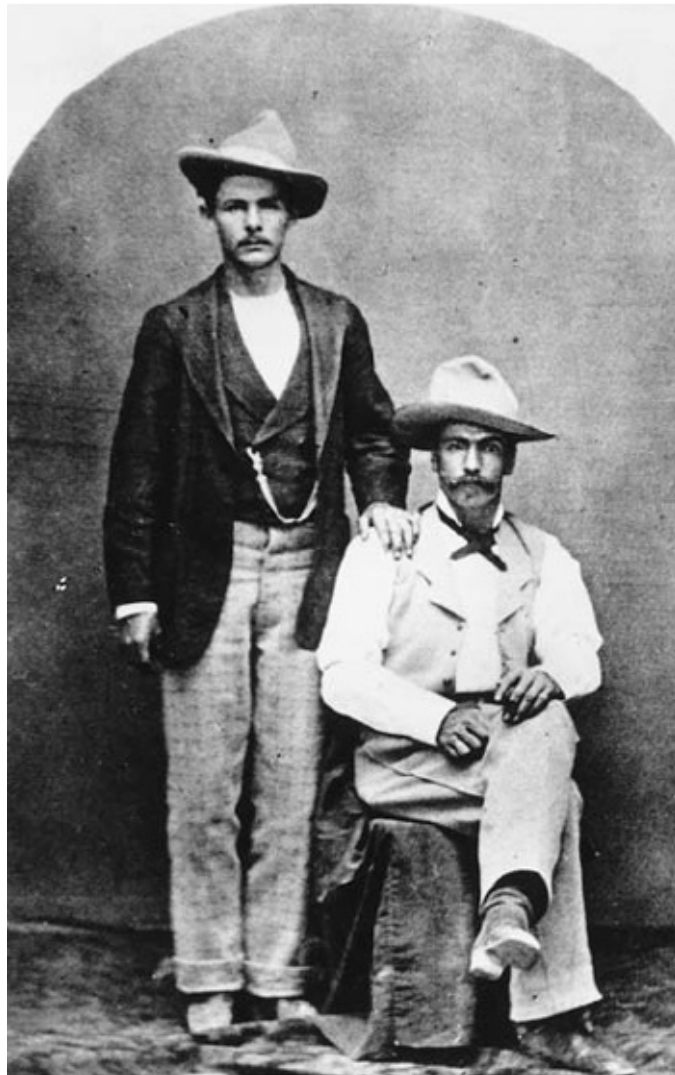
Capt. J. H. Hurst, Twelfth Infantry, commanding Camp Rucker, is in town. Captain Hurst is following some horse thieves, and has given them a close hunt. He offers a good reward for the capture of the thieves. See his advertisement.²

The advertisement read:

REWARD!!

A reward of \$25 will be paid for the arrest, trial and conviction of each of the thieves who stole six (6) Government mules from Camp John A. Rucker, A. T., on the night of July 21st, 1880.

It is believed these mules were stolen by parties known by the following names: PONY DIEHL, A. T. HANSBROUGH, MAC DEMASTERS [sic : Sherman McMaster].



Joe Hudgins (left) and Joe (Olney) Hill. *Courtesy Arizona Historical Society/Tucson, AHS 17491.*

It is known that the thieves were aided in the secretion of the stolen animals by parties known by the names of FRANK PATTERSON, FRANK M'LOWERY [*sic* : McLaury], JIM JOHNSON and other parties unknown.

It is known that the stolen animals were secreted at or in the vicinity of the McLowry Brothers' ranch, on the Babacomari river, on July 25th, 1880; and it is also believed that they were there branded on the left shoulder over the Government brand, U.S., by the letter and figure D 8.

Evidence to assist in the conviction of the thieves will be furnished by the undersigned.

An additional reward of \$25 will be paid for the recovery and delivery of each of these stolen animals to the undersigned.

J. H. HURST, First Lieutenant, 12th Infantry, A.A.Q.M., Camp John A. Rucker, A. T. Charleston, A. T., July 27, 1880.³

Wyatt Earp claimed under oath that he and his brothers Virgil and Morgan, Wells Fargo agent Marshall Williams, Hurst, and four soldiers had "traced" the mules to the McLaury ranch where they "found the branding iron 'D. S.'" According to Earp, Hurst made some kind of compromise and the pursuit of the mule thieves was abandoned, but not before McLaury threatened him.⁴ At the time of his statement, Earp faced possible murder charges, and it was necessary to establish a pattern of threats made against them. "Wyatt's story had obviously been carefully fashioned," probably with his lawyer's help.⁵ "In essence, Wyatt was allowed to say what he wanted to, true or false."⁶ Beyond Earp's statement, no evidence has been located that the Earps accompanied Hurst. Frank McLaury never mentioned their presence in his enraged rebuttal.

A CARD

In reference to a certain placard bearing date July 27th, 1878 [sic : 1880], and signed by one J. H. Hurst, 1st. Lieut. 12 Infantry, A. A. Q. M., Camp Rucker, A. T., I have in my own defense, to make to the public the following explanation.

On the morning of July 25th, 1880, this man Hurst came to my ranch with an escort of soldiers, accompanied by several citizens, and he took me aside and told me, in substance, that he had had stolen from Camp Rucker six government mules, stated that they were stolen by Pony Diehl [sic : Diehl] A. S. Hansbrough and Mac Masters (Sherman McMaster). I told him I had not seen either the men or the stock. He asked me if I did not know the men. I replied to him that I knew two of the men. He insisted that I should do what I could to see these men and have the stock returned, and to tell the men that he did not want to make any arrests. I told him I would do what I could to assist him. In the course of the next day I saw Diehl and told him exactly what Hurst had told me. Diehl replied that he knew nothing of the stock and had not seen it. I then saw Hurst and told him what Diehl had said to me, and I interested myself no fa[r] ther about it. The next thing I heard of was the placard which I refer to wherein my name is spoken of as a thief. If J. H. Hurst was a gentleman, or if I could appeal to the courts for protection, I would proceed differently in this matter, but Hurst is irresponsible and I have but one course to pursue, and that is to publish to the world that J. H. Hurst, 1st. Lieut. 12 Inft., A. A. Q. M., is a coward, a vagabond, a rascal and a malicious liar. This base and unmanly action is the result of cowardice, for instead of hunting the stock himself he tried to get others to do it, and when they could not find it, in order to cover up for his own wrong acts, he attempted to traduce the character and reputation of honest men. My name is well known in Arizona, and thank God this is the first time in my life the name of dishonesty was ever attached to me. Perhaps when the matter is ventilated it will be found that the Hon. Lieut. Hurst has stolen those mules and sold them, for a coward will steal, and a man who can publish the placard that bears his name is a coward. I am willing to let the people of Arizona decide who is right. Frank McLaury. Barbacomori, August 2, 1880.⁷

Some writers state the thieves were changing the brand on the mules when Hurst arrived at the McLaury ranch, a fact neither charged nor mentioned by Hurst. Nor did Frank McLaury mention the Earps or any lawmen, although Virgil was a deputy US Marshal, only “citizens” otherwise unidentified. “McLaury had cleverly tried to blame the army officer for stealing his own mules, a strategy of misinformation that would appear again.”⁸ This argument fails to consider the broad scope of 1800s history. Insulting cards appeared in western papers through the 1800s, but in general the authors “took the precaution of removing themselves to other parts.”⁹ An Earp biographer agrees, noting Frank McLaury “was more angry with Lieutenant Hurst than with anyone else.”¹⁰ John Ringo would later be linked to these men and their alleged threats by Wyatt Earp.

A. S. Hansbrough is relatively unknown, but the others are not. Sherman William McMaster was the son of Sylvester and Jannette McMaster and was born around 1853 in Jo Daviess County, Illinois. Raised at Rock Island, Illinois, McMaster vanished from the region by the time the 1870 census was taken.¹¹ He next appears in west Texas enlisting as a Texas Ranger on September 1, 1878. “Whether he was part of the Kinney gang from Silver City or simply moving west through Texas is not known.”¹² The *Santa Fe New Mexican* referred to John Kinney as the “leader of all the New Mexico rustlers, and the man who has proven such a terror to the cattle interests of the territory. . . . He has been operating in Southern New Mexico, Texas and Old Mexico for three years [1880–1883].”¹³ It is highly likely that McMaster was a gang member. Certainly his friend Pony Diehl was.

McMaster served as a Ranger through the appalling violence of the El Paso Salt War and its aftermath before being discharged on April 12, 1879.¹⁴ He may have been there when Ringo and Olney were fleeing Texas, but it is highly unlikely that the men interacted to any extent. It is more probable that McMaster moved on with Diehl to rejoin Kinney’s band.¹⁵ By 1880 he was operating in Arizona and charged with mule theft. He was closely associated with the Earps,

and Virgil Earp made no serious effort to arrest him on these federal charges.

Pony Diehl, born Charles Ray, appears to have been the son of Jeremiah and Mary Hagler Ray and was born around 1848 in Illinois. Also raised in the Rock Island area, he may well have been a childhood chum of McMaster. Diehl was involved in an 1876 shooting at Las Cruces when he, Kinney, and outlaws Jesse Evans and Jim McDaniels shot down five men at a dance.¹⁶ He appears to have been involved in the El Paso Salt War as a Kinney retainer and in the Lincoln County War.¹⁷ Ray claimed to be a brew master by trade.¹⁸ For a time he worked at Globe, Arizona, as a bartender.¹⁹

Two days after Hurst met McLaury, Sheriff Charles Shibell deputized Wyatt Earp. Earp had been serving as a shotgun messenger for Wells Fargo and was succeeded in that job by his brother Morgan.²⁰ Wyatt was a hard-working officer with great ambition, also serving in Tombstone's first fire company. During his free time, Earp dealt faro in the Oriental Saloon. This was not uncommon. Gambling was considered a respectable profession, and honest gamblers did not have a bad reputation.²¹ This apparently did not apply to Doc Holliday, who "could manipulate a crooked box when the odds required."²²

A correspondent named Clara Brown described the Oriental Saloon in a letter to the *San Diego Union* on August 3, 1880.

The Oriental is simply gorgeous and is pronounced the finest place of the kind this side of San Francisco. The bar is a marvel of beauty; the sideboards were made for the Baldwin Hotel; the gaming room connected is carpeted with Brussels, brilliantly lighted, and furnished with reading matter and writing materials for its patrons. Every evening music from a piano and a violin attracts a crowd; and the scene is really a gay one—but all for the men. To be sure, there are frequent dances, which I have heard called "respectable," but as long as so many members of the *demi-monde*, who are very numerous and very showy here, patronize them, many honest women will hesitate to attend.

Perhaps unfamiliar to modern readers, *demi-monde* is discreetly defined by one researcher as "a polite phrase denoting women who have lost their standing in respectable society." In short, prostitutes. This may well account for the observation, quoted earlier, that "The Oriental saloon was not considered a very safe place if a man was known to have money on him."²³

Holliday continued his violent ways in Tombstone. On October 8, he got into a dispute with gambler John Tyler in the Oriental Saloon. Friends separated the men and Milt Joyce, one of the saloon's owners, "remonstrated with Holliday about creating a disturbance in the saloon, a conversation which resulted in Holliday being bodily fired [*sic*] out by Joyce." Holliday returned and demanded his pistol but was refused and left. A few moments later he was back, armed with a revolver, and opened fire on Joyce who was hit in the hand and bartender William Parker in the foot. Joyce grappled with Holliday, pounding him to the floor with a six-shooter, and was only prevented from killing him by the intervention of local officers.²⁴ Holliday later pleaded guilty to a reduced charge of assault.²⁵

Further violence in the mining camp was not long in coming. Shortly after midnight on October 28, 1880, gunfire erupted on the streets of Tombstone. City Marshal Fred White hurried to the scene of the shooting and encountered Curly Bill Brocius. White demanded Brocius' pistol as Wyatt Earp seized Brocius from behind, wrapping his arms around the man. White grabbed the weapon by the barrel and jerked it toward himself. The pistol discharged and the bullet hit White in the stomach. White would later die from this wound, but not before describing the incident. Brocius, whom the *Epitaph* identified as "William Rosciotis," was not

well known in Tombstone at the time.²⁶

Some accounts attempt to place Ike and Billy Clanton, Tom and Frank McLaury, Pony Diehl, and Frank Patterson at the scene of the violence. The *Epitaph* reported, “A lot of Texan cowboys, as they are called, began firing at the moon and stars on Allen street, near Sixth. City Marshal White, who happened to be in the immediate neighborhood, interfered to prevent the violation of city ordinance, and was ruthlessly shot by one of the number.”²⁷ This was not what Wyatt Earp, Curly Bill, or even Fred White himself saw.

Earp promptly arrested all of the men involved in the promiscuous shooting.

Edward Collins, A. Ames, R. Loyd [*sic* : Lloyd], Frank Patterson and James Johnson were brought before Judge Gray yesterday morning on charge of violating city ordinances. A. Ames pleaded guilty to carrying concealed weapons and discharging same on the public streets. He was fined \$40, which he paid. Edward Collins, R. Loyd and James Johnson pleaded guilty to carrying concealed weapons, and were fined \$10 each, which was paid. Frank Patterson was discharged, it being made apparent to his Honor that he had used every effort to prevent the disturbance by his companions.²⁸

It is curious that Patterson, a man charged with aiding and abetting Sherman McMaster and others in stealing government mules, was the same man using “every effort to prevent the disturbance.” Earp testified, “I did not notice that he [Curly Bill] was drunk.” “I examined the pistol afterwards and found only one cartridge discharged, five remaining.” Morgan Earp corroborated Wyatt’s testimony. James K. Johnson, one of the men fined, testified, “as we got in the street some one pulled a pistol and fired. Brocius said ‘don’t do that,’ but they fired several more shots, and defendant and I ran across the street.” Johnson further testified that he lived in Charleston and was a miner, not a cowboy. Brocius was cleared and released.²⁹

On November 9, 1880, Wyatt tendered his resignation as deputy, before the votes in the election were officially tabulated and certified. It appears that Shibell asked for Wyatt’s resignation because he had switched his allegiance, a fact evidenced by contemporary papers. A letter signed “Hawkeye” states:

Our special election to fill the vacancy for City Marshal, caused by the death of Fred White, is over and has been hotly contested. Virgil Earp made a desperate fight, but his opponent, Ben Sippy, has beaten him by 52 majority. The “Earp” Family flopped for “Paul” on election day, thinking he was a dead winner, and went against “little Charlie,” but they failed to connect. Their ingratitude to one who had always been their friend has been marked by his many friends in Tombstone, and retribution politically has already reached one. Honest Abe Lincoln was right. “Never swap horses crossing a stream.”³⁰

It was a bitter political pill made worse by the fact that Shibell appointed John Behan, a staunch Democrat, to replace him.

John Harris Behan is falsely accused of being an outlaw collaborator, rank coward, and political hack. Born to Peter and Sarah Ann Harris in Westport, Missouri, on October 23, 1845, he was from a wealthy family. During the Civil War he served in the California Column assigned to dislodge Confederates from the southwest. He served as a mail carrier through Apache-infested country and in 1866 was one of six men who courageously fought it out with Apaches along the Verde River.³¹ In 1867 he was appointed a deputy sheriff of Yavapai County where he was elected sheriff in 1871.

Behan’s courage can be proven without doubt. His domestic life, however, was less than tranquil. In 1869 he had married Victoria Zaff. Two months later their first child, Henrietta, was born, followed by a son, Albert Price, in 1871. Four years later Henrietta died, and the couple later divorced, Victoria charging that Behan frequented a whorehouse, a charge he

never denied. Significantly, John Behan won custody of their son. Behan made his way to Tombstone in September 1880. Sometime during this period he began a relationship with a young prostitute named Josephine Sarah Marcus who had run away from home in California. Contrary to folklore, she had not gone to Tombstone to be with Behan. Marcus arrived in Tombstone in May 1880 “to work the dancehalls of that camp.”³²

Sadie, as she was then known, later switched her affections to Wyatt Earp who abandoned Mattie Blaylock as he had Sarah Haspel. It appears Mattie may been a prostitute in Tombstone. Justice John L. Larrieu stated, “I don’t like Wyatt Earp because he beat up his inamorata in the Oriental saloon for withholding part of her earnings as a prostitute from him.” One historian notes that Bessie and Mattie Earp and Kate Holliday all worked as prostitutes in Tombstone.³³ Alternatively, Larrieu may have been referring to Sarah Marcus.

Cochise County was created in early 1881. Governor John C. Fremont then installed a mixed group of Republicans and Democrats in office, infuriating the Republicans who viewed the political patronage as their right. Among the appointees was John H. Behan who was named sheriff whose “credentials as a peace officer were actually more impressive than Wyatt Earp’s.”³⁴

John Ringo kept a low profile until March of 1881 when his name was linked to the killing of Dick Lloyd, another transplant from the Lincoln County War. Of Lloyd one historian noted, “Some otherwise undistinguished individuals seem to be picked by fate to participate in a single spectacular incident which results in their names being remembered long after better men have been forgotten.”³⁵ Such is Richard “Dick” Lloyd, virtually unknown beyond Burns’ inaccurate portrait of a slow-witted wrangler.³⁶

One person who remembered Dick Lloyd before his departure for Arizona was Lily Klasner, who offers that Lloyd’s real name was Kelly, but he went by the name of his stepfather, Will Lloyd. “He was a good-hearted, hard-working boy about whom it was told that he would drink too much mean whiskey. He liked to go to Lincoln, get good and drunk, then race up and down the street firing his six-shooter. He always shot into the air, and never tried to hurt anyone. So far as I know, Dick Lloyd never killed anyone or stole anything.”³⁷

During the Lincoln County War, Lloyd was a member of the Murphy-Dolan faction. On March 6, 1878, he narrowly escaped capture when a posse of Tunstall-McSween supporters captured and later killed Frank Baker and William Morton.³⁸ Lloyd was also in the posse that killed Frank McNab on April 28, 1878.³⁹

Lloyd arrived in Arizona as a drover with a herd driven to the San Carlos Indian Reservation around November 1878. Others on the drive included George and Bill Graham, the latter sometimes incorrectly identified as Curly Bill Brocius.⁴⁰ He then took a job with Jerome B. Collins at the Bear Springs ranch. Lloyd next surfaced in Tombstone where he broke a horse before an admiring crowd in 1880.⁴¹ The admiration was short lived. On the very day Lloyd’s bronco-busting exploit hit the papers he was among those arrested in connection with Fred White’s shooting.

In March 1881 Lloyd ran head on into John Ringo. Breakenridge recounts that Ringo, Joe Hill (Olney), Tom Norris, Curly Bill, Jim and Nick Hughes, and others brought a herd of cattle up from Mexico, probably from Hill’s ranch, and held them in the San Simon Valley to fatten

before final delivery to San Carlos. They were probably also waiting for a customs agent to pass the herd.⁴²

After delivering the cattle at San Carlos, the men adjourned to Jack O'Neil's saloon to relax and enjoy a card game. Lloyd was present but drunk, and the men refused to let him play. Angered, Lloyd left the saloon and met Ed Mann, a former justice of the peace. Words passed between the pair, and Lloyd shot Mann. The drunken Lloyd then proceeded to steal Joe Hill's horse. Still angry that the card players had slighted him, he drew his pistol and rode into the saloon, firing as he went. The men at the table promptly shot him from the saddle. The horse bolted through the door with an irate Joe Hill in pursuit.⁴³

Breakenridge heard of Lloyd's death secondhand. Eyewitness Melvin W. Jones also described the shooting.

Dick Loid [sic] was killed in Jack O'Neal's [sic] at Camp Thomas two years after the drive there with them. I happened to be at the killing and was on the cor [o]ner's jury.

At the time of the killing there were in the saloon Jack O'Neil, proprietor, Barney Clark and Pete Brewer, bartenders, Curley Bill Graham and his brother George, John Ringo, Joe Hill, Tom Norris, Jimmie Hughes, old man Hughes, Charley Dook [Doak?] and two others that I can't remember. Jack O'Neil claimed he acted in self defense, so did the shooting.

Anyway, I am sure that while Curley Bill looked on he did not fire a shot at Dick Loid. They were good friends.⁴⁴

Contemporary news accounts confirm Jones' version. The *Arizona Weekly Citizen* titled its story "Triangular Shooting Affray": "This evening a desperado named Dick Lloyd shot and dangerously wounded E. Mann, ex-Justice of the Peace of this place. Lloyd afterwards threatened to kill others, and in attempting to ride into O'Neill's [sic] saloon, was instantly killed. The jury in this case exonerated O'Neil, who acknowledged to have done the killing, by a verdict of justifiable homicide. It is expected that Mann will recover; the attack on him was unprovoked."⁴⁵

In an account entitled "Justice at Last" dated March 9, the *Epitaph*, which had lauded Lloyd only months before, did not even spell his name correctly. "A Star special from Maxey of the 8th says: Dick Floyd, a notorious cowboy, shot E. Mann, Justice of the peace, this evening. After the shooting he rode into O'Neil & Franklin's saloon. O'Neil shot him dead, and then gave himself up. Mann, it is thought, will survive. Floyd has taken the town several times, riding into saloons, stores and private houses. He was a desperate character."⁴⁶

Contrary to popular folklore, no one called him Johnny Ringo in Texas, New Mexico, or Arizona. He was referred to as John R. The designation appealed to his vanity, but vanity has a way of being pricked. Sometime during 1881 a man purchased some mules from Ringo. The latter signed the bill-of-sale simply as "John R."⁴⁷ "John R. what?" queried the buyer.

"John R. Godalmighty!" returned Ringo, signing the bill.⁴⁸

The year 1881 would continue to bring John Ringo trouble. His inflated reputation impressed all but his oldest friends, and evidence suggests that men such as Ike Clanton looked to him as their champion. At the same time he continued to psychologically deteriorate. He was drinking more heavily, perhaps to ward off flashbacks from the Hoo Doo War, or perhaps because he was disillusioned with life. Regardless, all sources agree that when he was drunk, he was a hard, mean man. In the months to come, charges of murder would again be laid at his doorstep.

“a killer and professional cutthroat”

WITHIN DAYS OF LLOYD’S DEATH, a botched stage robbery proved pivotal in drawing John Ringo into what became the Earp-Clanton feud. On the evening of March 15, 1881, the Kinnear and Company stage left Drew’s Station for Contention. Driving the coach was Eli P. “Bud” Philpott (or Philpot), a native of Calistoga, California. Bob Paul, his contest for sheriff still unresolved, rode as shotgun guard. At a small incline two hundred yards from Drew’s, an armed man emerged on the east side of the road and shouted “Hold!” “At the same moment a number of men—believed to have been eight—made their appearance and a shot was fired from the same side of the road instantly followed by another. One of those shots struck ‘Budd’ [sic] Philpott, the driver, who fell heavily forward between the wheels carrying the reins with him. The horses immediately sprang into a dead run.”¹ Paul opened up with his shotgun and the highwaymen returned fire. The horses ran nearly a mile before Bob Paul could bring them to a halt. Miner Peter Roerig, riding on top of the coach, was also killed.

Word of the killings reached Tombstone around eleven o’clock. Morgan, Virgil, and Wyatt Earp quickly joined Sheriff John Behan’s posse and started for the scene along with Marshall Williams, the Wells Fargo agent.² A. C. Cowan, the Wells Fargo agent at Contention, dispatched thirty men after the killers. Paul, who had driven on to Benson, also assembled a posse and set off in pursuit. George W. Parsons tells the story:

A most terrible affair of last evening. First intimation I had of it was when Doc. Goodfellow burst into room and asked for rifle. Abbott finally let him have his upon Doc’s assurance he didn’t want to kill any one. I stopped our chess, got revolver and followed him up, not wishing him to get hurt if I could help it. Men and horses were flying about in different directions, and I soon ascertained the cause. A large posse started in pursuit—\$26,000 specie reported on stage. Bob Paul went as shot gun messenger and emptied both barrels of his gun at the robbers, probably wounding one. “I hold for no one” he said and let drive. Some 20 shots fired—close call for Paul. Capt. Colby wished me to form one of another posse, to head the robbers off at San Simon if we could get necessary information upon arrival of stage, and we worked the thing up. Got rifles and horses, and I got Clum (Mayor) and Abbott to go with us. Probably six in all. Information didn’t come as we expected, so delayed, and several of us shadowed several desperate characters in town, one known as an ex stage robber. Couldn’t fix anything. Budd Philpott, the driver, was shot through the heart and the passenger, a miner, through the back. Doc showed me the bullet that killed him—an ugly 45 caliber. Some more tracking tonight. Our birds have flown.³

One bird had not flown fast or far enough. On March 19, Behan’s posse, which included Virgil, Wyatt, and Morgan Earp, William Breakenridge and others, apprehended Luther King at Len Redfield’s ranch. The story varies according to who tells it but all versions generally agree that King told the posse they were trailing Bill Leonard, Harry Head, and Jim Crane. People soon learned of Leonard’s involvement. Parsons notes in his journal: “Marshall Williams in from hunting stage robbers. Told me at ball that they would have them and who they were. Know one of them Leonard—very well by sight and have had business with him. Know him to be a hard case.”⁴

King's accusation against Leonard, Head, and Crane is controversial. While some insist only four men were involved, the *Epitaph* initially claimed eight men participated in the bungled robbery. One of those suspected was Doc Holliday, a difficult point for Earp apologists who state that the shooters were "Billy Leonard, Jimmy Crane, and Harry Head."⁵ Another adds that "accounts, rumors, and accusations complicated perceptions" concerning Holliday, "and Doc clearly knew that his friendship with Leonard would cause problems for him."⁶ Fred Dodge, an acknowledged Earp partisan, informed Stuart N. Lake that:

"Doc [Holliday] was a tough citizen and a bad egg," and I was fully aware of the situation between Doc and Wyatt. Doc never played square with any one in that country. Bill Leonard was as hard as nails and was a stage robber and everything in the line of crime. Marshall Williams did do some tipping off [of Wells Fargo treasure shipments], but *Doc was a full fledged member of the gang that Leonard was in with* [emphasis added]. I know who was present at the holdup at the time Bud Philpot [sic] was killed and I know who killed him.⁷

Dodge identified the robbers as King, Leonard, Head, Crane, Holliday and Johnny Barnes.⁸ He did not name Philpott's killer but strongly implied it was Holliday. Holliday was seen riding a badly lathered mount from the scene of the robbery at about the time it took place. Witnesses to Holliday's headlong flight included Billy Clanton and cattleman John Horton Slaughter.⁹

"It is quite possible," a Holliday biographer states, "that Doc was an accessory before the fact in the attempted robbery of Kinnear's stage and the deaths of Philpot and Roerig."¹⁰ Resident Sam Aarons charged "The Erbs [sic] and their combinations would commit depredations, and immediately blame it on the Clantons."¹¹ "Doc was always considered a shiftless, bagged-legged character—a killer and professional cut-throat and not a whit too refined to rob stages or even steal sheep."¹² Among his close friends at Las Vegas was Bill Leonard, another member of Hoodoo Brown's gang.

Dodge was not the only man who linked Holliday, and by extension Wyatt Earp, with the attempted stage robbery. Jim Crane informed John Gray that Wyatt had planned it.¹³ Nor was the March 15 debacle the only Arizona holdup that Earp cronies were linked to.

On February 25, 1881, two masked men stopped the stagecoach bound from Globe, Arizona. The outlaws seized the Wells Fargo strongbox and the U.S. mail.¹⁴ Bob Paul wanted both Sherman McMaster and Pony Diehl for the crime.¹⁵ McMaster fled to New Mexico, but by July 21 he had returned. "Sherman McMaster appeared to visit Tombstone now without fear of being arrested by Virgil Earp."¹⁶ A federal crime was committed, and Virgil Earp was the local deputy US Marshal.

Marshall Williams, a friend of the Earps, was also named as the inside man on stage holdups plaguing Cochise County. Sol Israel informed Joe Chisholm that Williams roused him out of bed one night in a panic to liquidate his holdings. Israel refused to do business under such mysterious circumstances, but another man proved less scrupulous. Shortly after Williams' flight, a Wells Fargo agent arrived to investigate the holdups.¹⁷ Williams' books were short by several thousand dollars. Before he could be arrested "he absconded with what he could scrape together, and accompanied by a prostitute."¹⁸

Curiously, Wyatt Earp told Behan and Breakenridge that he did not want anyone talking to Luther King and was highly disturbed when he caught one of the Redfield brothers doing so.¹⁹

Wyatt was only a posseman at the time. It appears more logical that Virgil Earp, the deputy US Marshal, would discuss this with Behan who, in any event, was under no obligation to obey. Earp supporters insist Behan was in league with outlaws, but it is more likely that Wyatt feared King would name Holliday and, perhaps, himself.²⁰

Bob Paul posted descriptions of the men wanted for the Drew's Station stagecoach shooting with the notation "If arrested, immediately inform Sheriff Behan and the undersigned." Leonard was described in the poster as a morphine addict who chewed tobacco incessantly and was "known in Silver City, Otero and Las Vegas, N. M." Crain (Crane) was a 27-year-old drover, height around 5 feet 11 inches. Harry Head, the youth of the gang, was believed to be 18 or 20 and about 5 feet 5 inches tall.²¹

King did not remain in jail long. On March 28, 1881, he escaped from the custody of under sheriff Harry Woods. Woods, who was also the editor of the *Nugget*, attempted to put the best possible face on the incident.

Luther King, the man arrested at Redfield's ranch charged with being implicated in the Bud Philpot [sic] murder, escaped from the sheriff's office by quietly stepping out the back door while Harry Jones, Esq., was drawing up a bill of sale for a horse the prisoner was selling to John Dunbar. Under-sheriff Harry Woods and Dunbar were present. He had been absent but a few seconds before he was missed. A confederate on the outside had a horse in readiness for him. It was a well-planned job by outsiders to get him away. He was an important witness against Holliday. He it was that gave the names of the three that were being followed at the time he was arrested. Their names were Bill Leonard, Jim Crane and Harry Head.²²

Woods justifiably received severe criticism for his incompetence in allowing King's escape. The *Weekly Citizen* appropriately ascribed the escape to "inexcusable and culpable negligence."²³ In June 1881 Woods was fined for dereliction of duty.²⁴ Earp supporters charge Jones, Woods and Dunbar with aiding King's escape. It is hard to believe that the trio could not have created a better cover-up story to avert suspicion. The entire incident was a case of carelessness.

King's escape kept Holliday out of jail as well. Doc had every reason to hamper King's recapture.

FALSE ALARM.

A report was current on the streets that King, the missing cow-boy, had been killed by some of his companions near the Huachucas, in revenge for what information covering their crimes he is alleged to have given the officers. One of the rumors was to the effect that Crane, one of the Contention murderers, was in Charleston yesterday boasting of King's death. A telegram to Charleston, however, elicited the fact that the rumor of it was false, and it is thought the stories about King's death were started to throw the officers off the scent.²⁵

Despite its abrupt dismissal, the report of King's death was probably true. King vanished from history. His most likely killers were the men he had implicated. Wyatt Earp indirectly confirmed King's death. In June 1881 Earp approached Ike Clanton with a plan to trap Leonard, Crane, and Head, captured according to Earp, killed according to Clanton. Both men omit King from Earp's wanted list. The logical reason is that Earp already knew that King was dead.²⁶ King's disappearance did nothing to alleviate the suspicion of Holliday. There were at least three killers at large, all potential witnesses against Holliday and, possibly Wells Fargo agent Marshall Williams. Also possible, if Jim Crane was honest with Gray, Wyatt Earp could have been implicated in the aborted holdup and murders.²⁷

As the manhunt progressed, other events were occurring in Arizona that would divert attention from the criminal activities originating in Tombstone. Outlaws, both Anglo and Mexican, were raiding the region, but again, only the Cowboys were blamed. In February, one paper reported “San Simon cow boys are depredating fearfully upon Mexican stock raisers in Sonora.” J. N. Elias was one of those raided, and the report stated that there were “about two hundred of these cattle thieves, mostly from Texas.” The paper concluded, “It appears these cattle thieves are largely made up of the same bands who gave so much trouble on the Rio Grande for years past. Cattlemen of southeastern Arizona are also losing much stock from same source. The Apaches are still hovering along the borders of New Mexico and Chihuahua, and a man by the name of McMurray was driven from his ranch by a band of them last Sunday.”²⁸

As the border problems flared up, angry editorials appeared in southwestern newspapers. One of the victims, T. W. Ayles, wrote angrily to the *Epitaph* stating that he had to keep cattle on hand for his butcher business and could “if I had not to divide with unknown and irresponsible partners, viz: ‘Cow Boys,’ or some other cattle thieves.” Ayles went on to list others that had lost cattle: Judge Blair, P. McMinnimen, Dunbar at Teres Alamos and Burton of Huachuca among others, adding that “horses and mules are gobbled up” as well.²⁹

His concerns were well founded, and neither the law nor the ranchers on either side of the border were able to curb the stealing. While Ayles mentions “Cow Boys,” a clear reference to the old Martin gang, he did not preclude Mexican raiders. Newspapers, Governor John C. Fremont, and Acting Governor John J. Gosper make this abundantly clear. It is significant that none of the Cowboys named by Earp were charged with cattle theft in Arizona or New Mexico. Given the insistence of some that men such as the McLaurys, Joe Hill, the Clantons, Billy Claiborne and Frank Patterson were outlaws, the lack of indictments casts serious doubts on the credibility of the charge.

The upsurge in violence along the border presented a unique opportunity for Mayor John Clum, editor of the *Tombstone Epitaph*. Elections were scheduled for early 1882. If the Republicans were to win and Clum preserve the coveted mayoral position, he needed to present Tombstone as a law-abiding place controlled by Republicans, and to divert attention from Tombstone to the outlying countryside.³⁰

With sensationalized reports flowing out of Tombstone, the situation in Arizona could not, and had not, gone unheeded. The outlaw activity prompted the military to report to Robert Todd Lincoln, US Secretary of War. Lincoln brought the reports to Attorney General Wayne MacVeagh on April 12, 1881, concerning facts about “‘Cowboys’ and their outrages in Arizona and Sonora” and suggested that they be arrested by the US Marshal.³¹

Conspicuously ignored by those intent on maintaining Tombstone’s folklore is that neither US Marshal C. P. Dake nor US Attorney E. B. Pomroy reported the powerful “Cowboys” to their superior. MacVeagh was vexed that it was necessary for Lincoln to inform him while his own people in Arizona were oblivious to the situation. He wrote Pomroy a letter that scarcely concealed his anger. “You will forthwith upon the receipt of this letter make diligent inquiry and report to this office the facts as you find them concerning the outrages committed, as is alleged, in Arizona and Sonora by a gang of desperadoes called cowboys who make their escape across boundary lines.”³²

The reason Pomroy failed to report a “Cowboy Curse” was that he was unaware of it. Samuel Mulliken, chief clerk, sent some papers regarding “Cowboy depredations” to Pomroy on the fifteenth. Mulliken’s letter reached Pomroy ahead of MacVeagh’s. Unaware of the fictional Cowboy horde led by John Ringo, Curly Bill, and the Clantons, Pomroy replied to Mulliken to learn what the department wanted of him.³³ And well he might wonder, for not one iota of real evidence of the “Curse of the Cowboys” had been brought forward despite the fact that those later accused of being leaders had been in Arizona for some time. So little was known about Ringo, Brocius, and the McLaurys, that papers spelled their names incorrectly. “Ringo . . . never figured in anything significant around Tombstone” adding further that he was of “little importance.”³⁴ Of the McLaury brothers, the same writers add, “They are usually referred to as cattlemen, and were so indeed.”³⁵ The sensational news reports were not facts or legal complaints. This would soon change, as the generic term “cowboys,” applied indiscriminately to cattlemen, drovers, cattle thieves, stagecoach robbers, et al., evolved into Cowboys, a mythical gang that has dominated Tombstone folklore ever since.

By late April, the “King of the Cowboys,” John Ringo, had left Arizona, headed back to Missouri. The trip, no doubt, combined business and pleasure. At Austin, Texas, Ringo stopped to dawdle with the ladies of the evening.

Mr. John Ringo was in town early Sunday morning and was passing his time down in a house in the jungles. Along about 4 o’clock he missed his purse, and stepping out in the hall where some three or four of Austin’s nice young men were seated, he came down upon them with his little pistol and commanded them to “up hand,” he quietly searched the whole tea party. Not finding his purse he smiled beamingly upon the young men, and retired to his room while they quietly slid out and reported the facts to the police. Marshal [Ben] Thompson in person went down to the house, but was refused admission to the room, whereupon he cheerfully kicked open the door, and to the infinite disgust of Mr. Ringo, scooped him in. He was disarmed, and Officer Chenneville, who had arrived, marched him to the station, and yesterday he was fined \$5 and costs for disturbing the peace, and \$25 and costs for carrying a pistol. He settled with the city and left a wiser if not sadder man.³⁶

The arrest occurred about 6:00 a.m. The Record of Arrests gives Ringo’s name as “John Ringold” and lists his occupation as “stockman.”³⁷

While Ringo was visiting the “jungles,” his sisters were involved in far different matters. On April 18, 1881, Coleman Younger celebrated his birthday in San Jose. Listed among the many attendees were Mattie Ringo and “many others whose names we could not learn.”³⁸

During Ringo’s extended absence from Arizona, his companion from Maxey, George Turner, was killed. The *Nugget* reported that they learned from a Mexican that Jose Juan Vasquez and a party killed George W. Turner, a butcher named McAllister, Oliver, and Garcia when they resisted arrest. Vasquez was also killed. “It is rumored that in case certain parties are convinced McAllister has been killed, a company will be raised to go to Fronteras and ‘clean out’ the town. We trust no such measures will be taken, as it would result in loss of life on both sides, and no benefit be derived.”³⁹

Writing to Acting Governor Gosper later that year, Joseph Bowyer noted Turner’s death and added:

Last spring George Turner and M. McCalister [sic], two well known cow-boys, obtained the contract at Fort Bowie for furnishing beef to the command; they and two assistants went to Sonora to either buy or steal beef-cattle; they succeeded in driving a large herd as far as Fronteras, when they were attacked by the Mexican citizens. They (the cow-boys) were all killed, and one Mexican citizen was killed. Upon the bodies of Turner and McCallister [sic] was found the money which they ostensibly took to purchase cattle, which amount, compared with what they were known to have started here with, proved

that the cattle they were driving had not been paid for.⁴⁰

Bowyer's account was hearsay. The only people who could have carefully counted the dead men's money and report the amount to the authorities were the killers. Beyond this, who would have known how much money Turner was carrying when he left for Sonora? Considering the number of outlaws infesting the region on both sides of the border, to broadcast large amounts of money would have invited a confrontation.

In the article, the *Nugget* questioned "If the matter is ever investigated" implying doubt that it would. In fact Joe Evans, a deputy US Marshal, was working to resolve the border problems. He was able to determine the truth through his contacts in Mexico. Evans reported "The cowboys number about 380. They are constantly raiding in Sonora bringing out stock and killing Mexicans when they interfere. A great many Mexicans have been killed by the cowboys. In one instance the Mexicans retaliated by killing law abiding American citizens."⁴¹ Evans probably was including Mexican bandits with Anglos. The contents are no surprise. Turner and the others were innocent of what their killers attempted to portray.

Turner's murder on May 13 heightened tension along the border. On June 9 General Orlando B. Willcox reported that Lieutenant Craig had returned from a scout and learned of "threats made that people at Fronteras, Sonora should have to pay for so called murder of Turner's party." Craig's belief that "forty or fifty Cow-boys of bad character are ready for action between Los Animas and Galeyville" added fuel to an already volatile situation.⁴²

The United States government could not and would not tolerate an invasion of Mexico by American citizens. Leander H. McNelly had led his company of Texas Rangers into Mexico in 1875 in pursuit of stolen cattle. In the gunplay that followed, a number of Mexican citizens were killed. McNelly withdrew only after the Mexicans agreed to return the stolen cattle. The incident sparked an international furor, the like of which officials in Washington had no wish to repeat in 1881.⁴³

They would not get their wish.

“armed with a Henry side”

IN MANY RESPECTS TURNER’S MURDER in Sonora directly paralleled Tim Williamson’s death in Texas six years earlier. The similarities could not have escaped John Ringo. In the simplest sense, a “mob of foreigners” had killed ranchers over cattle, and if justice was to be done it would be up to the victims’ friends. That the “foreigners” were Mexican troops was irrelevant. During Ringo’s absence, events of import began unfolding in Arizona. On June 16, the *Arizona Star* heralded the beginning of the “policy of retaliation.”

PROBABLY A RAID.

From reliable sources we learned yesterday that a party of seventy cow-boys left Willcox for the purpose of making a raid on Fronteras, Sonora, near the border and about sixty miles from Willcox, their purpose being to avenge the death of the four parties who were killed three weeks ago in that neighborhood by the Mexicans. It has been known for some days that they were recruiting their force for the purpose of making this trip, and they openly avowed they would wipe out the town of Fronteras in revenge of the Americans killed. This intelligence was sent to the commanding general of the department, who at once notified Mr. Morales, the Mexican Consul at this place. He at once sent word to Fronteras, and to the troops’ station on the San Bernardino ranch, so that, ere the festive gang reaches the desired point, they will most probably have to measure bullet range with the Mexican Federal troops. Should they meet, there will be a warm fight. The cow-boys are reckless, daring fighters, good shots, ride good stock, and don’t place much value on life. The Mexicans will stand their ground, unless the quarters grow too close. We have no doubt, however, that ere this, the whole business has been determined, and should any damage be done to our Mexican neighbors, the United States cannot escape censure. This whole affair has been organized on American soil, and with an open and avowed purpose of murder, robbery and outlawry. We will await development of events.¹



Jim Hughes. *Courtesy author's collection.*

The report stunned the Southwest and grew in the telling. A New Mexico newspaper followed up the story on June 21:

Dispatches from Tucson of last Thursday, announced that about 70 cowboys, well armed and equined were marauding the country, raiding the small towns and scattering consternation in their path, with the avowed purpose of avenging the death of four of their comrades. The dispatch expressed the general fear that there would be bloody work, as they are the most reckless gang of outlaws ever banded together. What these 70 cutthroats have done is not yet known, but they and their gang will soon, without a doubt meet their just deserts. Arizona is being settled, and the U.S. troops will give the honest settlers assistance necessary to put down these lawless vagabonds, who are more of a disgrace to this country than the worst Bandits were in Spain or Italy.²

In Tucson, even Deputy US Marshal Joe Evans was initially taken in by the rumors and yellow journalism. On June 18 he reported to fellow deputy marshal Dake:

There is much excitement here and in Sonora relative to depredations being committed by the cowboys. It is reported that a few days since that they went into Fronteras Sonora and killed about forty Mexicans in retaliation for the killing of their companions by the Mexicans some weeks since. The state of affairs existing on the border has been communicated to our Govt at Washington by the Mexican minister resident. . . . The Mexican Consul here keeps me posted.³

The myth of the Cowboy Curse was now launched in earnest, but did they really raid Fronteras? Not according to Governor Luis Torres. On June 24, Torres wrote Evans in Tucson

asking for help. “The time has come when your aid will be of great importance to me as it was in the time of Brigidio Reyes and his crowd. I mean the invasion intended by the ‘Cow Boys’ to our territory near Fronteras.”⁴ Apparently, no raid had yet taken place as of June 24, and Torres further suggests that he had had no significant trouble with cowboys or anyone else since Brigidio Reyes had been put down. Why Torres decided to work with Evans in distant Tucson rather than Virgil Earp in Tombstone is intriguing, as is Earp’s failure to provide reports on the Cowboys. Virgil Earp did not submit any reports on the Cowboys to Dake, despite the fact that Tombstone was much closer to the action. Indeed, none of the early documents concerning “Cowboys” mention any of the Earps. There are several alternative explanations. Possibly Dake, Evans, and Torres did not consider him a “player” in the unfolding drama, which means his appointment was simply political patronage. Earp may have simply neglected his duties, which would amount to physical malfeasance of office. Or, most likely, Virgil already knew that the stories were rumor and fiction.

The phantom raiders proved elusive. T. S. Williams of Willcox challenged the *Star*’s initial report.

You say, in your edition of the 16th instant, that you are reliably informed that a party of seventy cow boys left Willcox for the purpose of making a raid on Fronteras. I can only say that you were wrongly informed; and I think you did us a great injustice to publish the report. Who would wish to settle in a town which could produce seventy cow boys in so short a time? If there are any cow-boys here they are gentlemanly fellows, and behave themselves like all other good citizens. This is a quiet place—almost too quiet. My opinion of the matter is that it is all a hoax. I think the cow-boys here have too much sense to engage in anything of that sort, at least on so large a scale.

The *Star* hedged its response.

We have made diligent enquiry since publishing the facts above referred to, and find that our informants were mistaken as to the band leaving Willcox; that it left San Simon instead. But as to the whole matter being a hoax, we only wish it was. The evidence appears to be all the other way up to the present writing. The band has been seen by several parties and it is a notorious fact that they have been recruiting their forces for this raid in the vicinity of San Simon and Galeville for the last three weeks. We fully endorse the writer when he says that the cow-boys of Willcox are gentlemanly fellows and frown upon all kinds of lawlessness. We did not intend to convey the impression that the cow boys were citizens of Willcox, or even recruited there, but that they left the vicinity of Willcox. The STAR has too much respect for that thriving town and its citizens to do an intentional injury.⁵

General Orlando B. Willcox responded quickly to the rumors and on June 8, eight days before the initial prediction of a raid, had already dispatched troops to scout the area. Willcox reported to the adjutant general:

Captain McLellan [sic], who left Bowie Seventh [sic : June 8], on scout down Eastern side of Chiricahua mountains, reports his return by way of the Tanks and Camp Rucker to Bowie on fifteenth. His orders were to protect persons and property and prevent raids into Sonora threatened by cow-boys. He discovered no evidence of raiding parties either to or from Mexico. He says that if any such parties were organizing, Lieutenant Craig’s Scout, previously reported, broke them up. I think this true so far as members within the borders of Arizona are concerned, but from Craig’s report and all other accounts these outlaws still invest [sic] Southwestern New Mexico.⁶

McClellan’s scout clarifies what was and was not happening in Cochise County. During the time that the great cowboy raid was supposedly being organized, McClellan found no evidence of the presence of raiders and concluded that Craig’s expedition had broken them up. Craig had returned from his scout two weeks before the *Star* printed its story. The phantom raiders were always someplace else leaving no traces anywhere they were reported to be. Possibly, as McClellan speculated, the raiders were in southwestern New Mexico. Yet a review of Grant

County's 1881 records indicates that veteran lawmen Harvey Whitehill and Dan Tucker were unaware of the mythical army. Both men were far too busy dealing with the real activities of Six-Shooter Smith and others of his ilk.⁷ The entire episode was a hoax generated by rumor and sensational dispatches from Tombstone that the *Star* accepted without the cautious reservation such sensationalism warranted.

While the phantom cowboy raid on Fronteras was making sensational headlines, town marshal Ben Sippy requested a two-week leave of absence, and Virgil Earp was appointed acting town marshal on June 6. Wyatt Earp was trying to run down the remaining stage robbers, or some of them anyway. Testifying under oath, Earp stated, "I told them [Ike Clanton, Frank McLaury and Joe Hill] I wanted the glory of capturing Leonard, Head, and Crane."⁸ Ike Clanton confirmed Earp's statement in part. "Wyatt Earp approached me, but I do not [know] that he ever approached Frank McLaury or Joe Hill. . . . He told me he wanted me to help put up a job to kill Crane, Leonard and Head."⁹ Within days Ike was nearly involved in a gunfight with a gambler named Denny McCann on June 8. The *Epitaph* reported:

What came very near being a serious shooting affray was prevented yesterday morning by the coolness and intrepidity of Virgil Earp, acting City Marshal. Ike Clanton, well-known in the San Simon and San Pedro valleys, and "Denny" McCann, a sporting man, had a difficulty in an Allen street saloon, when the latter slapped the face of the former. Clanton went out and heeled himself and "Denny" did the same. They met in front of Wells, Fargo's office about 9 o'clock and both drew their guns about the same time, when Earp stepped between them and spoiled a good local item. They are both determined men, and but for the interference of the officer there would doubtless have been a funeral, perhaps two.¹⁰

Significantly, the *Epitaph* again made no mention of Clanton's outlaw involvement.

Earp's frantic search for two of the robbers ended abruptly. On June 10, Ike Heslet and Bill Heslet ambushed Bill Leonard and a man identified as Harry "the Kid." Leonard died on the twelfth, but the Kid was still alive when the *Star* printed the story on June 23.¹¹ Only days later the Heslet brothers were unceremoniously gunned down by parties unknown. The *Star* stated that the assassins were led by Jim Crane.¹² Several writers include Ringo in the group, but he was in Missouri.¹³ When he returned to Tombstone in mid-July he registered at the Grand Hotel as "John Ringo, Liberty, Mo."¹⁴

Meanwhile, E. B. Pomroy completed his investigation of the Cowboys and filed his report on June 23. After defining "Cowboy" as a generic designation, he stated that the crimes involved were Territorial responsibilities, "but owing to its magnitude the Territorial officers are unable to cope with the difficulty." Pomroy recommended federal intervention and, specifically, the appointment of deputy United States marshals "to act in concert with the sheriff."¹⁵ Once again, Virgil Earp's name was not mentioned, but the suggestion that marshals needed to be appointed to aid Behan indicates that he was unaware of Earp's presence or had no confidence in Earp due to his lackluster performance to that time. Perhaps he knew of Virgil Earp's unusual friendliness with Curly Bill Brocius, as noticed by diarist Parsons, who reports, "our present Marshal [Virgil Earp] and said 'C[urly] Bill' shook each other warmly by the hand and hobnobbed together some time."¹⁶

Earlier, C. P. Dake, stirred into action, wrote Washington concerning the border troubles. "I have the honor to report that I am constantly in receipt of communications complaining of the depredations of 'Cow Boys,' and other organized bands of Outlaws, who are operating in the

Southern part of this Territory and raiding into Mexico.”¹⁷ In short, while one of Arizona’s top federal officials was defining cowboys as “a generic description” the other was receiving constant reports, which he apparently showed no one. Washington officials should have wondered why, if Dake had received depredation reports “constantly,” they had to be informed about them by the War Department. It was an ominous prelude to what proved a costly scam that drained public funds and launched an enduring myth.

One thing remains constant in all Dake’s correspondence: the matter of how much money he could spend. Was he really in need of more money to combat depredations that he had known nothing about until his superiors took him to task? Leigh Chalmers, a federal investigator, was asked the same question in 1885. Chalmers reported that Dake admitted to having received in excess of \$50,000 during his term of office, equivalent to around five million dollars today. Yavapai County Recorder William Wilkinson testified that Dake had purchased \$22,907 worth of property during the same period. Others testified Dake had deposited all of the funds into his personal bank account.¹⁸ Dake later blamed Wyatt Earp for embezzling some of the funds. Not surprisingly, Earp accused Dake.

On July 5, 1881, Kate Elder had signed an affidavit which led to the arrest of Doc Holliday for his involvement in the March stage robbery. Holliday was released on \$5,000 bond, one of his sureties being Wyatt Earp.¹⁹ Almost immediately Kate’s luck turned sour. The following day, she was arrested for being drunk and disorderly by Virgil Earp and spent the night in jail. The next morning, Kate was fined and released. She was soon arrested again for allegedly making “threats against life” and jailed.²⁰ Kate “promptly hired Wells Spicer and appealed her case.” She was released on a writ of *habeas corpus* the following day.²¹ Kate was soon on her way out of Tombstone, forced out by Wyatt Earp and Holliday. In later years she recalled, “I became desperate and in a vain hope of breaking up their [the Earps] association with Doc, whom I loved, I swore out a warrant charging him with the murder of Philpott and Roerig [*sic* : Roerig] and he was arrested by Sheriff Behan. But Wyatt Earp and others of his gang of legalized outlaws furnished \$5,000 bail to get him out. It took all of the persecution of the Earps and other law officers aligned with them to make me quit.”²²

More trouble struck the border in late July. Hancock reports that John McGill, Alex Arnett, and Milt Hicks stole a herd of cattle in Mexico and drove it north across the border. The men split up near the Double Adobe ranch. Hicks started his part of the herd toward Galeyville; McGill and Arnett headed for Lordsburg. Forewarned by the sensational news accounts of raiders from Arizona, a party of Mexican ranchers was quickly in hot pursuit of the thieves. Hancock’s report continued:

The Mexicans overtook the two outfits before they were out of sight of each other. They first took in after McGill’s outfit, and McGill and those with him abandoned the cattle and lit out over to where Milt was. They sized up the situation and concluded they were not strong enough to stand off the Mexicans so they all pulled out for the Lang ranch where they found John Ringo, Curly Bill, Joe Hill and some of the other boys. They saddled up and took after the Mexicans. They overtook them in the San Luis Pass and 14 Mexicans were supposed to have been killed and the cattle and some of the horses recaptured. I never heard that any of the boys were wounded.²³

Hancock was not an eyewitness, but John Gray was, and supported Hancock’s report:

In a frontier land where there is no law in reach and where it is one hundred miles to the County seat, taking two days of time at the best to reach by any kind of travel, a quick decision as to the right thing to do is often necessary. And it might lead to

embarrassing consequences, no matter what the decision. Such a crisis for both brother Dick and myself happened one bright morning at the old Animas Valley Ranch. Long before sunup a stranger rode up and appealed to us for help.

His story was that a well-armed bunch of Mexicans had appeared in the night at his camp at the old Double Dobies and had seized about one hundred head of cattle he was holding there while his partner had gone to Lordsburg for grub. The Mexicans, he said, were now rushing these cattle back to Mexico, and he asked us to help to recover them. We did not know the man, but the fact that he was white and a fellow American seemed in his favor—and a quick decision was necessary. We did not hesitate but agreed to go at once. We of course knew that these cattle might have been stolen from the Mexicans and that they might be only taking judgment into their own hands. But there was the other side to look at—a man of our own kind had appealed to us for aid, and we feared too that our horses might have been picked up on the way.

If on overtaking the herd, we found the Mexicans were only regaining their own stock which had been stolen, and done no harm, we could turn back.

So we started and rode to overtake the Mexicans if possible before they reached the Mexican border. We picked up four more cowboys at the Lang ranch who willingly joined us on hearing the story, and, seven strong, we dashed ahead.

We knew they must be heading for Deer Creek, the only possible pass that cattle could be driven through into Mexico, and true enough, we soon saw the dust raised by the herd. As a precaution against an ambush we took to the high ground on each side of the pass, and scattering out, we each fired a shot in the air to suggest to the Mexicans we might be a bigger force than we were. This evidently worked, for despite our waving of hats when we came in sight of the herders to show our “friendly interest,” they fired a few shots which came close enough to alarm us. We dismounted and hid behind our mounts, and then saw the Mexicans had abandoned the herd and were speeding up their mounts in an evident attempt to get away. . . . No loose horses were in the herd, and we suddenly realized the rustler (which he then admitted to be) had worked us to a finish. . . . and if again we were called upon to make a choice between a white man and a Mexican, and there were no known extenuating circumstances in favor of the Mexican, we would have to step to the side of our countryman. Such was the universal law on the border involving relations of the “gringo” and the “greaser.”²⁴

Burns claimed that the Gray party was made up of Curly Bill Brocius, John Ringo, Joe Hill, Jim Hughes, John and Charlie Green, Charlie Thomas, Tall Bell, and one or two others, presumably the Gray brothers. He further identifies the original cattle thieves as Milt Hicks, Alex Arnett, Jack MacKenzie, John McGill, Bud Snow, and Jake Gauze.²⁵

Both Gray and Hancock state that the cattle were stolen, but a contemporary account differs.

CATTLE THIEVES ROUTED.

From Bob Clark, who recently returned from New Mexico, the NUGGET learns that about the 26th of last month, a party of Mexicans from Sonora made a raid into the Animas and adjoining valleys, and rounding up several hundred animals, started with them through the Guadalupe Pass for Mexico. The Mexicans numbered about thirty all told. The cattlemen organized about twenty in number, and pursuing the marauders, overtook them on the plains near the Pass. A running fight ensued, which resulted in the flight of the Mexicans, and the recovery of the cattle. He also states that in Skull Canyon he struck a pack train of about thirty mules which had evidently been stampeded, as their packs were turned upside down, and there was no one in charge of them. He expressed the opinion that the train was a smuggling one from Sonora, and that the owners had been attacked by the Rustlers and killed, and the train had stampeded during the melee. It is reported that a smuggling trail leads through this neighborhood, and that very often trains are taken in by the marauders who infest that country. The Mexicans can make no complaint to the authorities, being engaged in an unlawful business themselves.²⁶

Clearly, Clark regarded Ringo and the others involved in the fight as ranchers, not outlaws. Certainly Curly Bill could have been at Lang’s ranch, if he was indeed there, for any number of reasons.

Clark’s comments on the smuggling train are equally valuable. It was that incident that was expanded into the Skeleton Canyon Massacre where Ringo was allegedly involved. Later writers expanded on the story, but it is important to remember that Clark was offering an opinion. He found no dead Mexicans, and the mules could have stampeded for a number of reasons. An attack on smugglers was unlikely. The object of such an exercise would have been to capture the mules and their cargo, not to permit them to gallop off to an unknown destination.

But if the whole Skeleton Canyon Massacre was bogus, the next incident was not.

ANOTHER OUTRAGE.

Report comes to us of a fresh outrage perpetrated by the cowboys in Sonora. Early last Monday morning a party of sixteen Mexicans from the interior of Sonora, on the way to this Territory to purchase goods and carrying \$4,000 for that purpose, stopped at a curve in the road at Los Animas near Fronteras, to prepare their frugal breakfast. While busily engaged preparing their tortillas they were saluted with the music of twenty rifles fired by cowboys who lay in ambush awaiting them. The Mexicans took this an invitation to leave and did not stand on the order of their going but left all their mules and pack saddles in which they carried their money for the purchase of goods. When they stopped running they were at Fronteras and their party was four short. The missing men are supposed to have been killed. The citizens of Babispe and troops are after the cowboys and are disposed to take summary vengeance if they overtake them.—Citizen²⁷

The Mexican government quickly notified Evans in Tucson, who promptly reported the affair to Dake on August 4: “The Mexican Consul here has just received dispatches confirming the reported raid of the cowboys into Sonora near Fronteras, killing four Mexicans and robbing others of \$4,000 and other property. The Mexicans express great dissatisfaction at the seeming neglect of our Gov’t and threaten to take revenge on all Americans in Sonora.”²⁸

The unveiled threat of reprisals against American citizens, innocent and guilty alike, got action from Dake, but not too quickly. Never one to miss a chance to cry for more money, Dake telegraphed MacVeagh in Washington. His duplicity is transparent, for while he received the letter during business hours, he waited until 2:31 a.m. to send his wire so that it took on an added sense of urgency.

Following dispatch just rec’d from Tucson. “Cowboys have just maid [sic] another raid into Sonora killing four Mexicans and robbing others of four thousand dollars. The Mexican government are very much incensed and threaten to take matter into their own hands if they are not protected by our government. (signed) J. W. Evans Deputy marshal.” Have sent deputy and posse after cowboys. Expense will be five to ten thousand dollars if pursued until successful. What amount allowed on my estimate for witnesses and marshal. Shall be governed in regard to my efforts in this matter by amount allowed on estimate over expense of courts about to convene. Owing to washouts on railroad no eastern mail rec’d here for past ten days. Answer.²⁹

Unaware that Dake had sent him after the Cowboys, Evans wrote Dake again from Tucson: “Gov. Torres informs me that there are three hundred soldiers on the border of Sonora who will render us every assistance possible. The Mexican Consul does not think it possible for them to obtain the names of the cowboys who made the late raid into Sonora.”³⁰ Evans agreed, but believed sufficient evidence would eventually be found in Arizona. As usual the closest deputy US marshal to the border, Virgil Earp, did nothing. Certainly Dake and Evans ignored him. Governor Torres did as well and possibly had never heard of Virgil Earp.

Factual evidence notwithstanding, the names of John Ringo, Newman Clanton, Jim Hughes and others, depending on which writer is telling the story, have been linked to the brutal attack. Most, if not all of these folktales are apocryphal, usually aimed at tarnishing the names of the participants to make up for the lack of real evidence against them. A case in point is Newman Clanton. Considering the role Clanton is alleged to have played as an outlaw chieftain in Tombstone folklore, it is mind-boggling that he was not charged in a single indictment. According to Hancock, Milt Hicks confided that he, Jim Hughes, and Hughes’ brother-in-law Jack MacKenzie attacked the Mexicans at Fronteras.³¹

By now nearly all depredations were being credited to the everelusive “Cowboys.” When outlaws ambushed three of General Pesqueira’s Mexican soldiers, killing one, the *Epitaph’s* headline screamed, “The Murdering Cowboys.”³² When some mules and a horse were stolen

from a freighter name Leopold Graff, the paper called for lynch law.³³

By August 1881, Ringo was drinking more heavily while living in a new war zone. He was becoming more erratic and showing a growing tendency toward flawed judgment. Such was the case in Galeyville where, while he was playing poker and losing heavily, he asked for credit and one of the players refused. An angry Ringo stormed out of the saloon, rounded up Dave Estes and returned to the game.

A SOCIAL GAME

Galeyville is noted as the rendezvous of the festive “cowboy.” It is there he most congregates and joins in the amusement peculiar to his clan. On last Friday one of them known as Ringold entered into a game of poker and not being as expert with the “keards” as he is with his “gun” he soon went “broke.” But, the Star adds, he returned with a companion named David Estes, one being armed with a Henry side and the other with a Six Shooter. The players were promptly ordered to hold up their hands and the cowboys proceeded to go through the party securing in the neighborhood of \$500.00. Some of the party were so frightened that they broke for the woods where they remained concealed until daylight. A well known salon keeper who was in the room had \$500.00 on his person. He dodged the Henry rifle and the Six shooter and escaped into the darkness returning shortly with a shotgun, but the bold desperados had vamoosed. When the robbers left the town they took with them a horse belonging to one of the citizens.³⁴

According to Breckenridge, Ringo simply intended to teach the players an object lesson and later asked Joe Olney to return the money to them.³⁵ Ringo thought he deserved an apology. Instead, both he and Estes found themselves charged with larceny for their ill-conceived “lesson.”

“the sympathy of the border people seems to be with them”

ONCE AGAIN, RINGO faced serious charges in Arizona. Newspapers in the territory “were now calling him ‘Ringold’” just as some had in Texas years earlier. One biographer theorizes, “either the person who reported the robbery account to the newspaper knew of Ringo’s Texas past or someone at the newspaper was aware of it.”¹ Ringo was better known among the cattlemen of southwestern New Mexico and southeastern Arizona. But in the fall of 1881 he was not well known in Tombstone, which he rarely visited. When he was arraigned for the robbery, he was asked if John Ringgold was his true name and he denied it.² It is hardly likely such an error would have occurred if he was a “crime lord” as suggested.³ Ringo apparently returned to New Mexico after the robbery. Dave Estes was arrested and brought before Justice of the Peace G. W. Ellingsworth for a hearing. The *Star* reports that Estes “robbed a game of about four hundred dollars” and “confiscated a valuable horse.” The charges were quickly dismissed.

His honor ruled in the examination of the witnesses that they could not testify to the taking of the money ordered by the bandits to be left on the table, unless they of their own knowledge knew whom a particular parcel of money belonged. This could not be proven, as all the occupants of the room were commanded to absquatulate [leave] instantly, leaving Estes and his “pard” to take and divide.⁴



E. L. Ferguson, alias Pete Spence. *Courtesy author's collection.*

Other events soon took center stage. As day broke on August 13, a party of Anglos driving a herd of cattle to Tombstone was ambushed in Guadalupe Canyon. Five of the men were killed, among them Newman H. Clanton. Authors point to the killing of these men as proof they were cattle thieves. Without documentation one states they “were caught with a herd of rustled cattle in Guadalupe Canyon” and wiped out.⁵ Another adds, “It is likely the Clanton group was a mixture of rustlers and honest cattlemen.”⁶ None of these writers sources their conclusions, although the incident is one of the best-documented events in the region’s history.

Meanwhile, in New Mexico Territory, Jim Crane had second thoughts about being on the run. Once, gunman Buckskin Frank Leslie had sought him out under the guise of arresting him. Leslie had learned that Crane was in the habit of taking his noon meal at the Gray ranch. John Pleasant Gray recalled a confrontation between the men at the Gray ranch. Leslie “came out and reported his mission was to arrest Jim Crane and take him to Tombstone on the charge of stage robbing.” Gray objected to an ambush being sprung at his ranch because he “did not think he would be able to arrest Jim without killing.” As Gray told the story, his warning proved unnecessary:

Jim Crane rode up at his usual time on a fine saddle mule, unmistakably a refugee from some army post. And as dinner was ready I asked both [Crane and Leslie] in to the meal. It happened we three were alone, except for our old cook, Moody. Jim Crane packed his carbine—a short, Sharp’s rifle—into the cook tent and sat down on Leslie’s right with the gun across his lap and the muzzle in Frank’s direction. I don’t think any one of us relished that meal much, and I know I should have preferred to be elsewhere.

Leslie departed peacefully after whispering to Gray, “Tell Jim if they want him someone else will have to serve the warrant.”⁷ Who sent Leslie remains unknown. Leslie was a simply a bartender at the Oriental Saloon, not a lawman. Crane realized, though, that he was marked for death and became nervous. He was now convinced his best option was to surrender to the authorities, “thinking that he had a good chance for a light sentence.”⁸ That would be better than being constantly on the *qui vive* with the likes of Frank Leslie gunning for him.

Gray does not speculate about who sent Leslie, but there are indications that it was the Earps. Crane informed Gray that the Earps had planned the March 15 stage robbery that cost two men their lives.⁹ Although the Earps’ involvement is impossible to prove today, Crane’s confession provides additional evidence that they were at least in part responsible for the robbery. Fred Dodge admitted to Stuart N. Lake that Doc Holliday was among the highwaymen and that Marshall Williams had tipped the robbers.¹⁰ If Holliday was involved, the Earps probably knew of it.

On the evening of August 12, Crane rode into the camp of Billy (or Will) Lang. Lang was driving a herd of cattle to Tombstone, and Crane was hunting a meal.¹¹ Perhaps he was also seeking protection. Gray’s brother, Dixie Lee Gray, had joined Lang for protection as well.¹² With typical Western hospitality, Crane was permitted to stay the night. In Lang’s party were Newman Clanton, Billy Byers, Charley Snow, and Harry Ershaw. The following morning a hail of gunfire ripped into the camp. Byers survived to tell the tale.

We picked our camp in a small swag between three low hills, which formed a sort of triangle around the camp, and at daybreak the cattle appeared uneasy and showed signs of stampeding, when Will Lang said to Charley Snow, who was guarding the cattle, “Charley, get your gun; I think there’s a bear up there, and if so, kill it.” Charley then rode up one of the hills when the Mexicans opened fire, shooting him and pouring a volley into the camp. At the time they fired Dick Gray, Jim Crane and myself had not got up, but Will Lang, old man Clanton and Harry Ershaw were up or dressing. Gray, Crane and Clanton were shot at the first fire, and almost instantly killed. When they first fired and killed Charley Snow I thought the boys were firing at a bear, jumped up out of my blankets, and as I got up the boys around me were shot. As soon as I saw what was up I looked for my rifle, and not seeing it I grabbed my revolver, and seeing them shooting at us from all sides, started to run, but had not gone forty feet when I was shot across my body, but I didn’t fall, and in a few more steps was hit in my arm, knocked the pistol out of my hand and I fell down. When I was down Harry and Will passed me both running for the canyon. Soon Will fell, shot through the legs, and he then turned his revolver loose, and I think killed one Mexican and wounded another, as one man was killed and another badly wounded, and he was the only one that did much fighting. You must remember that the reason we had no chance to fight was that the Mexicans had crawled up behind the low hills mentioned, and being almost over us fired right down among us. We could see nothing but little whiffs of smoke. . . .

I saw some Mexicans coming from the direction Will and Harry had run, wearing their hats, and I then thought they had been killed or had lost their hats in getting away. When I saw the Mexicans begin stripping the bodies, I took off what clothes I had, even my finger ring, and lay stretched out with my face down, and as I was all bloody from my wounds, I thought they would pass me by, thinking I was dead, and already had been stripped. I was not mistaken, for they never touched me, but as one fellow passed me on horseback he fired several shots at me, one grazing my head, and the others striking at my side, throwing the dirt over me. But I kept perfectly still and he rode on. They stripped the bodies, cut open the valises, took all the horses and saddles, and in fact everything they could, possibly getting altogether, including money, \$2,000.¹³

An indignant howl swept the border as newspapers picked up the story.

A MEXICAN OUTRAGE.

The Journal has the following special from Tombstone. This town is excited over the killing of five Americans by Mexicans. Dick Gray, Billy Lang, _____ Clanton, Chas. Snow and Billy Byers were those killed, and a man named Harris [sic : William Byers] wounded. John Gray and Mr. Ames arrived from New Mexico this afternoon and gave the following particulars of the killing: Five days ago Billy Lang, son of Mr. Lang, butcher, left here for his cattle ranch, accompanied by Billy Byers and Chas. Snow, to bring in cattle. Old man Clanton, formerly living in San Pedro, and Dick Gray, of Tombstone, who owns two ranches in the vicinity of Lang’s ranch, were helping to get up the cattle. The camp was surprised while all were asleep by a

party of Mexicans. Three Americans killed by the first fire, two others were killed, outright and the sixth, Harris [sic], was shot through the abdomen and left for dead, but is still living. James Crane, one of the noted stage robbers, came to Lang's camp the night before the assault to get something to eat and remained there during the night, and is among the killed. He is the last of the gang of robbers who participated in the stage robbery when Bud Philpot was killed. There is great indignation and excitement here. The Mexicans made good their escape across the line.¹⁴

The *Star* reported:

BORDER WARFARE

The Recent Massacre in New Mexico

The Tombstone Nugget of the 16th inst., contains full details of the recent massacre of Americans in Guadalupe canyon, New Mexico. Parties who were on the ground within a few hours after the murders were committed are now in Tombstone. The following is the story of one of them, John Gray, brother of one of the victims of the horrible tragedy.

A party of seven started on the morning of the 12th from Lang's ranch with a band of cattle for the Tombstone market. They camped that night at Guadalupe canyon, and in the morning, the 13th, at about sunrise, while all but two of the party were asleep, they were surprised by a party of twenty-five or thirty Mexicans, who opened fire upon them, and killed my brother, Dixie Lee Gray, Billy Lang, old man Clanton, Charley Snow, and Jim Crane. Billy Byers was shot through the right arm, and, I think, through the stomach, and he will probably die, if not already dead. The seventh man was known as "Harry." I don't remember his other name. He says after the firing commenced, he concealed himself behind a large brush and emptied two revolvers at his assailants. At this time he was joined by Billy Lang, and they concluded to try and escape and started to run, when the Mexicans opened a full volley at them and Billy fell. The bullets whistled all around him, one grazing the bridge of his nose, but he succeeded in getting away without any further injury and made his way back to Lang's ranch. Immediately upon his arrival there the boys at the place hurried to the scene of the killing and found the bodies of five men. They then commenced to search for Billy Rogers [sic : Byers] and found that he had been taken in by a rancher near by, but had in a fit of delirium again wandered off. In a short time they found him in an exhausted condition, and took him to Lang's ranch.

The D. L. Gray mentioned as among the killed was a son of Col. Mike Gray, well known in Tucson and also throughout California. The prevailing impression in Tombstone now, is that the murders were committed by Mexican Troops. It is known that a company of soldiers, under command of Capt. Carrillo, were scouring the country in the vicinity of the massacre in search of a party of cowboys who had been depredating on Mexican soil. It is not unlikely that this affair may lead to serious complications between the two governments. At any rate it will result in bloody border feuds between representatives of both nationalities, as the victims of the outrage were well known and have many friends, and their deaths will not be allowed to pass unavenged.¹⁵

And in New Mexico, *The New Southwest and Grant County Herald* reported:

ANOTHER KILLING.

The following letter was received last Wednesday evening and fully explains itself.

SHAKESPEARE, N.M.

Aug. 17, 1881.

I have just heard the particulars of the massacre in the Animas Valley, which are as follows: On Saturday morning, the 13th inst. a party of seven men were camped about five miles below Lang's ranch, and near to Skeleton Valley. About daylight they were attacked by a large party of Mexicans, five out of the seven were killed outright, one mortally wounded and one missing. The names of the killed were Mr. Clanton, father of I. & P. Clanton, Richard Gray, son of Judge Gray of Arizona, James Crane and William Lang. The name of the fifth is unknown. The wounded man lived long enough to tell the particulars. His name was William Byers. The missing man's name is Charles Snow. There were one or two more men missing at the time my informant left Gillespie.

If I hear any further particulars I will let you know.

GREAVES.

To S. M. ASHENFELTER,

Silver City N. M.¹⁶

Men from Arizona and New Mexico converged on the scene, including John Ringo. The voice of sensationalism was added by Mayor John Clum, who threw the military into a panic by irresponsibly reporting that the men were raising armed parties to seek revenge. From the

Presidio in San Francisco, Assistant Adjutant General Kelton reported to the adjutant general in Washington, DC.

Following telegram received from Commanding General Department of Arizona:

“Clum the Mayor of Tombstone reported seventeenth killing of party of Americans by Mexicans in Guadalupe Canyon and starting of large parties from Tombstone and vicinity for Mexico in retaliation.”

These reports confirmed from Camp Huachuca and Fort Bowie. The Mayor of Tombstone asks what steps the Military have taken. I have not been called upon by civil authorities to make arrests as in the case contemplated by Attorney General, but have ordered troops to be sent to the border to intercept all armed parties raiding into Mexico with hostile intent and disarm them, or if found returning, to aid the civil authorities to arrest them. The troops seem powerless to act under the posse committatus [sic] law, and, local Commanders have done nothing beyond asking information and reporting. The last parties killed are said to be Cowboys, but the sympathy of the border people seem [sic] to be with them and I doubt whether any local civil authorities can, or will do anything to prevent retaliation.¹⁷

No troops were necessary. The parties simply went to recover the bodies and took no chances of being caught in a Mexican ambush. Yet the government, swayed by Clum's irresponsible report and partisan politics, further fueled the myth of the cowboy curse. They were not the only ones deceived by Clum. Some readers of the *Epitaph* were ready to believe anything his newspaper printed. Among them was George W. Parsons who callously penned an entry revealing a great deal about himself and his lack of understanding of the West.

Bad trouble on the border and this time looks more serious than anything yet. Dick Gray—the lame one—was killed by some Mexicans, along with several others, among them the notorious Crane, and revenge seems the order of the day, a gang having started out to make trouble. This killing business by the Mexicans, in my mind, was perfectly justified as it was in retaliation for killing of several of them and their robbery by cowboys recently, this same Crane being one of the number. Am glad they killed him, as for the others—if not guilty of cattle stealing—they had no business to be found in such bad company.¹⁸

Echoing Parsons' sentiments, Clara Brown wrote to the *San Diego Daily Union*:

The massacre of Americans near Guadalupe Canon, occasioned great excitement in Tombstone, particularly among the more lawless element of the camp. Dick Gray, one of the young men killed, was a son of the Gray famous in the town-site scheme. His father and a Mr. Lang, who also lost a son, started out the day after the news was received at the head of a large party of men, it was supposed on a raiding expedition across the line. About two hundred armed and mounted men from the vicinity have left for the scene of the murder, and it is generally believed that any Mexicans so fortunate as to cross their pathway will be summarily shot down.¹⁹

Significantly, neither the newspapers of the day nor any of the correspondents knew Newman Clanton's first name. As Bailey puts it, “They were not the leading outlaw family of the West, as promoted by many Earp lovers.”²⁰

While the violence perpetrated on both sides of the border by Americans and Mexicans alike continued to strain relations between Mexico and the United States, another factor was being added to the deadly mix. Up in “Hell's Forty Acres” the Apaches had become restless. The previous June an Apache mystic and healer named Noch-ay-delklinne had become the central figure in revival-type religious gatherings where he reportedly promised to resurrect two Apache chieftains from the dead. Alarmed by these events, San Carlos Indian agent J. C. Tiffany determined to put a halt to them. On August 29 General Eugene A. Carr, leading a force of 117 men from Fort Apache, arrested the Prophet. Later in the evening, violence erupted, leaving the Prophet and seven soldiers dead.²¹ The command withdrew to the fort. Within days the Apaches killed seven men within eight miles of the post. On September 1 they attacked Fort Apache.

News that the Apaches were restless was enough to put the settlers on the alert, even without the border skirmishes. Following the attack on Fort Apache, a rumor circulated that Carr's command had been massacred.²² At Tombstone, a mass meeting was held at Schieffelin Hall with John Clum presiding. Republican Tom Fitch "did a good thing by restoring confidence in a speech, stating what the result would be to Tombstone if this scare got abroad."²³ Quite obviously Fitch was concerned about the business interests of the community, expressing confidence that the military could handle the situation. So, while Globe, Florence, Galeyville and the lower San Pedro fielded ranger companies, Tombstone did nothing. When stock thieves stole the livestock from some freighters near Soldiers Hole, demands for a ranger company intensified. The thieves were not identified, but the *Weekly Citizen* blamed the Cowboys.²⁴ No ranger company was ever formed. "Horses and mules were never requisitioned, and arms destined for Tombstone went instead to militia units closer to the San Carlos reservation."²⁵

According to Wyatt Earp, his family's feud with John Ringo originated with a stagecoach robbery near Bisbee. On September 8, 1881, the Bisbee stage left Tombstone carrying a Wells Fargo box containing \$2,500. Five miles from Bisbee two masked men halted and robbed the coach.

Upon receiving the news, Marshal[I] Williams, Wells, Fargo and Company's agent here, informed Under Sheriff Woods of the case, and Deputy Sheriff Woods was soon in the saddle en route for the scene of the robbery.

Later a party consisting of Marshal[I] Williams, Wyatt and Morgan Earp, and Frederick Dodge also started to hunt the trail of the highwaymen. Nothing positive is known as to who the road agents were, but circumstantial evidence points to several parties well known in Tombstone. Though having a long start, if their trail is struck, we have no doubt of their capture. The Sonora line has heretofore been no bar to pursuit of other criminals, by some of the pursuing party, and in all probability will not this time.²⁶

A few days later two suspects were apprehended.

Wyatt and Morgan Earp, Marshal[I] Williams and Deputy Sheriff Breakenridge, who went to Bisbee to arrest the stage robbers on Sunday evening, brought in Deputy Sheriff T. C. Stilwell and P. Spencer, whom the evidence strongly points out as the robbers. They were examined before Wells Spicer, Esq., yesterday and were admitted to bail in the sum of \$7,000 each—\$5,000 for robbing the mail and \$2,000 for robbing D. B. Rea. The evidence against Deputy Sheriff Stilwell is circumstantial, and rests principally upon the tracks made by his bootheels in the mud, which corresponded with those he had removed by a shoemaker upon his return to Bisbee. The Epitaph has no desire to prejudge the case, but if it turns out as now anticipated that the officers of the law are implicated in this nefarious business, it would seem to be in order for Sheriff Behan to appoint another deputy.²⁷

The arrest of Behan's deputy Frank Stilwell was a political embarrassment that the Republican *Epitaph* used to full advantage even without a conviction.

Stilwell, born in Iowa around 1855 to William Henry and Charlotte B. Winfrey Stilwell, arrived in Arizona accompanied by his brother Simpson Everett "Comanche Jack" Stilwell in 1877.²⁸ On October 18, 1877, he killed Jesus Bega at Miller's Ranch near Prescott in what was ruled self defense.²⁹ He found employment as both a teamster and miner. Stilwell was also charged with others in the killing of J. W. Houton at the Brunckow Mine in November 1878 but was acquitted for lack of evidence. At Charleston he operated various businesses and later became a partner of Pete Spence in other enterprises including a saloon in Bisbee. In April 1881 John Behan appointed him a deputy sheriff.³⁰

Pete Spence was living under an assumed name. He was born Elliott Larkin Ferguson in East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, around 1851, probably to Robert and Louisa Ferguson.³¹

Either his father died or his parents divorced, and in 1857 the family was living in Live Oak County, where his mother Louisa was married to John R. Williams.³² On June 29, 1874, Ferguson joined Warren Wallace's frontier battalion, serving as second lieutenant.³³ The company was intended for limited service against outlaws operating in the region. During his service he may have been the unnamed lieutenant involved in the murder of the Trevino brothers on July 18, 1874.³⁴ In 1875 he was charged with theft of a gelding in Live Oak County, and the following year was charged with a bank robbery with eleven others, including John King Fisher, under the alias Pete Spencer.³⁵ By 1878 he had moved to Pima County, Arizona, where he and William Cavaness were charged with the killing of William Creelon. The men were found not guilty.³⁶

Stilwell and Spence were bound over for trial for the stagecoach robbery. Perhaps by coincidence, two other accused stage robbers, Pony Diehl and Sherman McMaster, also emerge more clearly at this time. In mid-September Diehl was arrested at Harshaw, a mining camp thirty-five miles from the robbery site, and charged with stage robbery. Sheriff Bob Paul had asked Virgil Earp not to arrest McMaster until after Diehl was captured.³⁷ Learning that Diehl had been taken, Virgil Earp wired Paul inquiring if he wanted McMaster. Paul's reply was addressed to Marshall Williams.³⁸

The same evening, Virgil Earp was informed that Ringo had ridden "into town with his horse in a lather." Virgil inquired as to Ringo's whereabouts and was told he was with McMaster.³⁹ "McMaster was warned by John Ringo to leave town, and it is doubtful that Virgil Earp was involved in helping him escape."⁴⁰ The *Nugget* reported simply that "a 'pal' of McMasters slipped into town and informed him of the arrest of Deal [sic]."⁴¹ This leaves unanswered the question of how Ringo learned of the telegram. The most likely scenario is that Marshall Williams, in league with the stage robbers, informed McMaster. McMaster opted to flee Tombstone. As he did, Virgil Earp spotted him and ordered him to halt. McMaster ran, and Earp ineffectually emptied his pistol after the fleeing man. Earp later claimed that because his authority did not cross the city line, except in federal matters, he asked Behan, who had just returned from Yuma, to pursue the fugitive. Meanwhile McMaster stole two horses from E. B. Gage and fled toward Harshaw.⁴²

On September 17, 1881, Joseph Bowyer wrote Acting Governor John J. Gosper, "A notorious cowboy known as John R. offers to sell all the mutton the town can consume at the rate of \$1.00 per head. No secrecy is observed in this kind of transaction."⁴³ Bowyer did not inform Gosper what evidence he had that the sheep were stolen, his apparent aggravation being the fact that Ringo was one of the men who had held up the poker game as he noted earlier in the same letter.

Interest in the stage robbers faded when, on September 30, 1881, four bands of Apaches under the leadership of Geronimo, Juh, George, Bonito, and Nachez fled the reservation and headed south. On October 2 they ambushed a freight train, killing five teamsters, then moved down the western side of the Sulphur Spring Valley. On October 3 they struck Henry Hooker's horse remuda, stealing horses before they pushed on for Mexico.⁴⁴ The failure of Tombstone to field militia now proved unfortunate.

On the night of October 4, the White Mountain Apaches fought a skirmish with cavalry north of Middle Pass in the Dragoon Mountains. “Late last night Bulford informed that Indians and soldiers were fighting in Dragoon Pass north of town and having a regular battle. The Indian scare spread through town.” Hearing of the fighting, Clum, Behan, and Virgil Earp attempted to organize a company to intercept the Apaches. Twenty men of undoubted courage were recruited, including Wyatt and Morgan Earp, Billy Breakenridge, Charles Reppy, Marshall Williams, George W. Parsons, Milton Clapp, and others. “We then called off by fours every fourth man to hold horses in engagement and quickly went for the trail which we followed sometime and then thinking to cut it, struck across Sulphur Spring Valley.”⁴⁵

The men left on the afternoon of October 6 and rode for the Swisshelm Mountains. At least one man warned George Parsons not to go: “An old Indian scout and frontiersman advised me not to go out unless we joined the military, but my situation was such that I couldn’t and wouldn’t turn back, and I knew we were a pretty good set of men and thought we might be able to hold the Indians till the military should arrive.”⁴⁶

The Apaches slipped past them, and the militia started back toward across the Sulphur Spring Valley. A man named Frink stayed behind to hunt extra horses. It nearly cost him his life. “After a feed for man and beast, we recrossed the Sulphur Spring Valley to McLoring’s [*sic* : McLaury’s] under a hot sun and over a boggy valley, leaving Frink behind, who shortly after our arrival, came in on a run with several head. While he was hunting up some stock, the Indians opened fire on him, but he escaped unhurt, so the red devils saw us all the time and we didn’t see them.”⁴⁷

At the abandoned ranch, the troop ran into Curly Bill Brocius and two other men traditionally identified as Billy Grounds and Zwing Hunt, although Parsons does not name them.⁴⁸ Virgil Earp greeted Curly Bill like an old friend.

At McL’s was Arizona’s most famous outlaw at the present time, “Curly Bill,” with two followers. He killed one of our former Marshals, and to show how we do things in Arizona, I will say that our present Marshal and said “C Bill” shook each other warmly by the hand and hobnobbed together some time, when said “CB” mounted his horse and with his two satellites rode off.⁴⁹

The party joined up with a cavalry patrol and spent the night at their camp, finally returning to Tombstone at one o’clock the following day.⁵⁰ Despite their lack of success in intercepting the Apaches, it was a brave effort.

Two things emerge from Parsons’ journal. As late as early October 1881 the Earps were on friendly terms with Curly Bill. Also, the McLaurys were so obscure that Parsons did not know their name, referring to them as the McLorings.

All of this was about to change. Within a month, a violent confrontation between the Earps and the McLaurys would shake Tombstone to its foundations.

“desperate and dangerous”

THE BRUTAL MURDERS IN GUADALUPE CANYON intensified tensions and racial hatred along the border. Many of the cattlemen in the region hailed from Texas. Border warfare and feuds were nothing new. These men did not care what the government wanted. Friends had been killed, and if the government could not or would not act, they would. It was the savagely biblical law of the feud demanding an eye for an eye.

John Ringo had no intention of attacking the Mexican army, but he may have considered an opportunity for revenge. A. M. Franklin encountered him after the ambush. In 1925 Franklin recalled that L. M. Jacobs & Co., of Tucson, sent him to the San Simon to take charge of a herd of cattle being driven north from Durango and Chihuahua. Franklin arranged for the customs agent at Silver City, New Mexico, to meet him and clear the herd, which was in charge of a man named Jim Sprague.

After the herd reached the San Simon, Sprague, Franklin, and four of the Mexican herders were detailed to take the first watch. Everything was calm until shortly after midnight when the herd stampeded. Franklin tried to outrun the cattle and was finally overtaken by Joe Browning:

Browning, seeing how I stood rode towards me; he caught up and said without introduction: “You damn fool, haven’t you got sense enough to circle around so as to get the cattle milling and stop this damn stampede? You’ve been the ringleader of it for the last four miles, leading the cattle.”

This was the first information that I had that the cattle were stampeding; it was certainly the first information I had that I was leading the stampede.¹

The drovers settled the cattle and again bedded them for the night.

The following morning, Sprague and two hundred of the cattle were missing. According to Franklin, Sprague had reported the herd’s arrival to Ringo who, with six or eight other men, stampeded the herd and cut some of the herd. Franklin saddled his mount and headed toward town where he saw “bunches from 3 to 10—not a man or horse in sight” as he rode. At Galeyville he met Ringo.²

Ringo was surprised by Franklin’s appearance. After a few rounds of drinks the conversation turned to why Franklin had come. Franklin told Ringo that his cattle had stampeded during the night and that the herd was about 175 head short.

He looked at me with his baby blue eyes, which actually danced with excitement and first said: “Did you see anything as you were coming up the trail?” I answered: “I thought I did but I’m not sure.”

He then said “Why in the hell didn’t you send your Mexicans up to get your cattle?”

I answered: “They’ve got as much as they can attend to and if you and your fellows will round up the cattle I’ve lost and deliver them to me at the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation it will be worth \$10 a head to me, or it will be worth \$5 a head to me if you can deliver them to me at San Jose, which was a little settlement—the first settlement on the Gila river after the river leaves the mountains and the first place to water the cattle.

He joshed with me a little while and said again: “I’m sorry you didn’t send your Mexicans.”

Ringo agreed to round up the cattle in return for a mere \$100, less than a tenth of what Franklin was willing to pay, an obvious indication that he had no financial motives. As Franklin left, Ringo asked again, “Why in hell didn’t you send your Mexicans up to get them anyhow? They’re the fellows we wanted to have some fun with.”

Franklin believed the beeves were stolen. From his description it is clear the cattle were scattered, something no thief would have done. It appears that Ringo was either good-naturedly pulling his friend’s leg or he had attempted to lure the Mexican wranglers into an ambush.

Franklin also provides a good description of Ringo at this time.

John was over six feet tall, rangy, bony and strong as a horse. He had light blue, baby eyes that would cause you to love him when he was looking at you, but you wanted to travel from him like lightning when he was under the influence of liquor. He was admittedly the best pistol shot in the country. His best trick was to hold a .45 caliber Colt on the index finger of each hand, barrels down, and at the word would give the pistols a three-quarter turn, simultaneously shooting both at beer bottles and always knocking the neck off one or two. I recall that John made a bet that he would send the bullets into the open necks of the bottle twice out of five, at fifty feet. He won many a bet of this kind.³

While the Apaches were an increasing threat, Dake advised MacVeagh that he was “solicited to take active measures for the protection of mail-stages and routes of communication from the depredations now being perpetrated by Indians and other outlaws.” Dake detailed attacks on stages and the death of his deputy, George L. Turner. On September 6, 1881, Turner and Henry Moody had ridden from Globe to the Middleton ranch with the news that Apaches were raiding in the vicinity. At the ranch they were killed by a band of Apaches. The Middleton family barricaded themselves in their home and fought off the attackers.

“I have no doubt that at the present time many of the depredations reported by the Indians are committed by outlaws, both Mexicans and whites.” As usual, Dake was singing the familiar refrain: how much money could he spend?⁴ This time he added an interesting twist in blaming Apache raids on outlaws. Six months into the Cowboy Curse, Dake had done nothing to suppress outlawry other than to write letters asking for money.

Meanwhile, John Gosper responded to an August letter from Secretary of State James G. Blaine concerning Anglo-Mexican relations: “While it is true Americans on our side of the line dividing the U.S. from Mexico are often guilty of murder and theft upon the citizens of Mexico, it is equally true that Mexicans on their side of said line are equally guilty with Americans of murder and theft, and until recently—until the cow-boy combination along the border for common plunder—the crimes committed against citizens of both the governments of the U.S. and Mexico along the border were in most part committed by citizens of Mexico.”⁵ Gosper confirms in this statement that until the *Epitaph*’s sensational and politically motivated stories catapulted a fictitious “Cowboy Curse” into the public forum, Mexican bandits had been the main threat along the border. The Apache outbreak added to the chaos, and Dake’s attempts to blame their actions on the ever-elusive Cowboys distorted the realities of the situation still further.

On October 1 William Claiborne killed James Hickey at Charleston. Hickey “had been on a spree for several days and was very quarrelsome and abusive towards everyone he met.”⁶ Hickey was following Claiborne around Charleston trying to pick a fight. Hickey was “taunting Billy about his nickname [the Kid] and insulting his manhood.” When Hickey pulled a gun, Claiborne shot him.⁷ Claiborne was arrested and later released on bond pending his trial.

On October 8, five outlaws tried to rob another stagecoach near Charleston. The driver jumped from the stage and the horses bolted. The outlaws pursued the stage until it crashed, then robbed the passengers.⁸ Six days later the *Epitaph* reported in part that Stilwell and Spence had been arrested on October 13. It has been incorrectly reported that “Five days later, Wyatt and Virgil Earp arrested Frank Stilwell and Pete Spence for the robbery, further antagonizing the cowboy crowd.”⁹ The actual story was carried in the *Epitaph*.

Yesterday afternoon Stilwell [*sic* : Stilwell] was found in town and was arrested by Wyatt Earp, U. S. Deputy Marshal. Simultaneously with Stilwell’s arrest, City Marshal Earp arrested Peter Spencer, who was implicated in and arrested for the Bisbee stage robbery, along with Stilwell. The nature of the charge upon which the two compatriots have been re-arrested could not be learned last evening.¹⁰

Stilwell and Spence were rearrested by Virgil Earp on charges stemming from the September robbery at Bisbee. Wyatt may have been acting as a temporary deputy at the time.¹¹ The prisoners were then taken to Tucson for safekeeping.¹²

During the Apache raid noted previously, Frank McLaury was reported to have lost twenty-seven horses to the hostiles. He and Tom, aided by the Clantons, began gathering their stock with the intention of selling out and leaving Arizona. Wyatt Earp testified:

About a month or more ago [October 1881], Morgan Earp and myself assisted to arrest Stilwell and Spencer on the charge of robbing the Bisbee stage; the McLowrys and Clantons have always been friends of Stilwell and Spencer, and they laid the whole blame of their arrest on us, though, the fact is we only went as a Sheriff’s posse; after we got in town with Spencer and Stilwell Ike Clanton and Frank McLowry came in; Frank McLowry took Morgan Earp into the street in front of the Alhambra, when John Ringgold, Ike Clanton, and the two Hicks boys were also standing by, when Frank McLowry commenced to abuse Morgan Earp for going after Spencer and Stilwell.¹³

Wyatt placed this incident in mid-October—if it occurred at all. The *Nugget* was more accurate, noting that Virgil Earp returned from Tucson on October 14.¹⁴ Supporters of Tombstone folklore accept Wyatt’s testimony without considering his “limited veracity must be taken into account when assessing his recollections.”¹⁵

Earp’s statement has troubling inconsistencies. Wyatt stated that he knew of “threats at different times” against them, yet as recently as October 6, 1881, the Earps were on friendly terms with Curly Bill Brocius, the lead “Cowboy” of the time as verified by Parsons.¹⁶ This scarcely indicates an antagonized “cowboy crowd.” Beyond this, the McLaurys had sold their stock to Apollinar Bauer in late September and were preparing to leave Arizona.¹⁷ Following the Apache sweep through the region, the brothers spent their time rounding up their herd. It is extremely doubtful they had time to ride to Tombstone, particularly with Joe Hill who was busy protecting his family and Ringo who was in New Mexico.

Wyatt’s informants are also an interesting group. Marshall Williams was the inside man used by the stage robbers.¹⁸ Big Ed Burns was a career criminal known as a killer, conman, and tinhorn gambler notorious throughout New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado. In August Morgan Earp was “identified by a Tucson newspaper as a member of leading tinhorn gambler Ed Byrnes’s [*sic* : Burns’] gang of Benson ‘top and bottom’ thieves.”¹⁹ Burns ran with the likes of Six-Shooter Smith (John Henry Hankins) and the Off Wheeler (J. J. Harlan), friends of Holliday, and other thugs such as Three-Shooter Smith, who at times worked as a railroad engineer, among other alumni of Hoodoo Brown’s gang. By his own admission, Wyatt was

allied with known criminals.

There is other evidence the story was a lie. “Morgan Earp and Doc Holliday returned from Tucson Saturday evening [October 22],” although Wyatt claimed Morgan was in Tombstone when the threats against them were made.²⁰

Despite the fact no threats were made, violence would erupt in Tombstone between the McLaurys, Clantons, and Earps. The reasons remain obscured by folklore, lies, and half truths.

On the evening of October 25, 1881, Tom McLaury and Ike Clanton arrived in Tombstone.²¹ They stabled their horses at the West End Corral on Fremont Street, and then separated. Clanton went to the Occidental’s lunchroom when Holliday entered and began cursing him, called him a “son-of-a-bitch of a cowboy” and told him to go for his gun. The unarmed Clanton attempted to reason with Holliday. “All the time I was talking, he had his hand in his bosom and I supposed on his pistol. I looked behind me and saw Morgan Earp with his feet over the lunch counter. He had his hand in his bosom also, looking at me.” Clanton wisely left the room, the enraged Holliday and Morgan Earp on his heels. Outside, both men challenged Clanton to fight. Wyatt and Virgil Earp lounged nearby. “Morgan Earp told me if I was not heeled, when I came back on the street to be heeled. I walked off and asked them not to shoot me in the back.”²² Wyatt’s testimony confirms Ike’s in part.²³

Amazingly, while carrying weapons in town was a violation of city ordinances, Virgil Earp neglected his duty to disarm and arrest his brothers and Holliday. Virgil admitted under oath that he did not deputize the three men until he was told that the Clantons were on Fremont Street. “I then called on Wyatt and Morgan Earp, and Doc Holliday to go with me and help disarm them.”²⁴

Shortly after this confrontation, Ike Clanton got into a poker game with John Behan, Tom McLaury, and Virgil Earp. The men played cards until eight o’clock on the morning of October 26. Virgil Earp kept his pistol in his lap during the game. After the game, Ike retrieved his weapons. Between 8:30 and 9:00 he met E. F. Boyle, a night-shift bartender coming off duty. Boyle stated that Clanton told him he intended to fight the Earps and Holliday.²⁵ Saloon owner Julius Kelley concurred. “I asked Clanton what trouble he had been having. He stated that the Earp crowd and Doc Holliday had insulted him the night before when he was not heeled; that he had now heeled himself, and they had to fight on sight.”²⁶

Stopping at R. F. Hafford’s saloon, Clanton again complained that Holliday and the Earps insulted him.²⁷ He then went to the Capitol Saloon. Between 1:00 and 1:30 in the afternoon he emerged and headed for the Pima County Bank. As he did, Virgil and Morgan Earp came up behind him, and Virgil struck him on the head with his pistol. He was disarmed, taken to court and fined twenty-five dollars. Wyatt arrived at the courtroom. “He called me a thief and a son-of-a-bitch, and told me I could have all the shooting I wanted.” Wyatt then offered Ike a rifle, muzzle first.²⁸ Wyatt confirmed some of Ike’s testimony, but countered that Morgan had offered Ike a pistol and that Ike had started the bickering.²⁹ Clanton wisely refused the weapon. Again Virgil Earp failed to disarm his brothers in accordance with the city law he was sworn to uphold.

Wyatt then stepped out onto the street, where he met Tom McLaury. According to Wyatt, McLaury “had a pistol in plain sight” and offered to fight him anywhere. This claim is

intriguing, for James Kehoe stated that “Tom McLaury was not armed at the time he was at the shop—there was nothing in sight to show he was armed. He had on a dark blue blouse of light [weight] material and dark pants and vest. The blouse came down about the length of his arms. It was outside of his pants.”³⁰

Earp slapped McLaury then struck him over the head with his pistol. There was no arrest attempt since Wyatt had no legal authority. Virgil Earp did not arrest his brother for the unprovoked assault confirmed by witnesses. Apollinar Bauer, a butcher, said Wyatt hit McLaury in the face while McLaury’s hands were in his pockets. Earp had asked if McLaury were “heeled,” then struck him “two or three or maybe four blows with his pistol.” As the rancher lay bleeding on the ground, Earp shrieked, “I could kill the son-of-a-bitch.”³¹

J. H. Batcher, a bookkeeper, added that Tom said he did not know what Earp had against him, that he had never done anything against him, and that they were friends. Tom also said, “whenever [Wyatt] wanted to fight, [Tom] was with him [on his side].” Earp then drew his illegal pistol and struck him.³² Thomas Keefe, a carpenter, also saw the brutal, unprovoked beating.³³

At two o’clock, Billy Clanton and Frank McLaury arrived in Tombstone from Antelope Springs. William Allen recalled that Doc Holliday greeted both men cordially, a curious incident if the Clantons and McLaurys had actually threatened the Earps.³⁴ Soon after, Billy and Frank met their brothers. Learning of the day’s events, they immediately prepared to leave town. It was already too late.

The so-called “Gunfight at the O. K. Corral” is smothered in controversy. Writers favorable to the Earps charge that John Behan, Billy Claiborne, Billy Allen, and Wes Fuller all lied under oath. Unsupportable statements are offered as fact such as Allen was a “cowboy partisan” and was “believed” to have fired at the Earps.³⁵ Not a single witness ever testified that Allen was a participant. R. F. Coleman, standing beside Allen during the fight, does not mention Allen’s alleged gunplay. Nor do such authors offer sources for the belief. Historians favorable to the ranchers counter that statements of this kind were created from whole cloth to discredit witnesses damaging to the Earps and sway readers to their point of view.

The most common “pro-Earp” theory is that the Clantons planned to kill the Earps to prove to their “gang” that they had not lured Leonard, Crane, and Head into an ambush. These theories do not account for Joe “Hill” Olney, curiously omitted, who had as much reason to fear reprisal if Earp’s statements were true. Olney would certainly have joined the Clantons and the McLaurys, bringing with him his brothers Sam, Dan, and George and with them John Ringo. They could also call upon the Redding brothers and the Lacys who had migrated to Arizona with them. None of these men were in Tombstone that day.

Earp supporters state Virgil Earp deputized his brothers and Doc Holliday to disarm and arrest the four “cowboys” although Earp already had three deputies whom he curiously did not call upon.³⁶ “I then called on Wyatt and Morgan Earp, and Doc Holliday to go with me and help disarm them.”³⁷ An analyst of the gunfight adds that his decision “made the confrontation seem personal.”³⁸ It was.

Virgil Earp further testified that John Behan said, “I have disarmed them all” as evidence Behan lied on the stand.³⁹ If Behan actually said it, why had none of the Earps asked the

obvious question: where are the guns? It was an obvious question that indicates the probability Virgil Earp lied under oath.

In the Earp version, Billy Clanton and Frank McLaury, indifferent to the fact that their brothers were unarmed, went for their guns. Others argue that the Earps intended to kill the men, who raised their hands (or in Tom McLaury's case, threw open his coat) and were unceremoniously shot down. The testimony of those with no stake in the fight sheds light on what really happened on October 26, 1881.

Did the Earps plan to kill the Clanton and McLaury brothers? As they passed Bauer's butcher shop, Mrs. Martha J. King saw and heard them clearly:

I stepped to the door and looked up the sidewalk and I saw four men coming down the sidewalk. I only knew one of the party and that was Mr. Holliday. . . . Mr. Holliday was next to the buildings, on the inside. He had a gun under his coat. The way I noticed the gun was that his coat would blow open, and he tried to keep it covered. I stood in the door until these gentlemen passed and until they got to the second door. And what frightened me and made me run back, I heard him [one of the Earp brothers] say, "Let them have it!" And Doc Holliday said, "All right."⁴⁰

Did Tom McLaury throw open his coat as some witnesses stated to show he was unarmed? Coroner H. M. Matthews stated Tom was struck by twelve buckshot in the right side.⁴¹ There were no wounds on Tom's arm, indicating that his arms were away from his body and holding his coat open.

Did Frank McLaury start the fight by drawing on the Earps before they fired? James Kehoe saw it clearly. "In less than a minute, I heard two shots in quick succession. I saw Frank McLaury running out on the street, *drawing his pistol* [emphasis added]."⁴²

Was Billy Clanton shot with his hands in the air? Thomas Keefe, who examined Billy immediately after the shooting, stated that he had been shot about two inches above the wrist, and the wound "went from the inside to the outside."⁴³ Keefe stated that the wound on the outside of Clanton's wrist was the larger of the two, clearly the exit wound made when his hands were in the air.

Was Tom McLaury armed? Both Andrew Mehan and J. H. All-man stated Tom's weapons were checked at the time of the shooting.⁴⁴ Keefe added that no weapons were found on his body. No one saw Tom McLaury fire a gun.

Were the men noted troublemakers and outlaws? Bartender E. F. Boyle testified:

A. Knew Tom McLaury about 18 months, never knew him to be in a difficulty with anybody.

A. Knew Billy Clanton about the same length of time. Never was on intimate terms with him. Never knew him to be in any difficulty.

Q. Did you ever of your knowledge know of Frank McLaury to be in any difficulty?

A. No sir.⁴⁵

Attempts to discredit witnesses who testified in the hearing rely on untenable supposition and innuendo, Earp apologists insisting that they were "Cowboy witnesses." The question comes down to Wyatt's credibility, the honesty of a man facing a possible trial for murdering three men, one unarmed, and the attempted murder of Ike Clanton. Did Wyatt and Virgil Earp lie on the witness stand? One analyst writes, "we have seen that he lied."⁴⁶ Another is less kind regarding Wyatt's honesty, referring to him as "the West's greatest windbag."⁴⁷

In less than a minute three men were killed on October 26, 1881, for a misdemeanor. Virgil

and Morgan Earp were wounded as Frank McLaury and Billy Clanton fought desperately for their lives. Behan arrested Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday. The other Earps were taken away for medical treatment. The evidence strongly suggests that sinister motives were involved.

“we have seen that he lied”

MORE THAN ONE ANALYST DOUBTED that Wyatt told the truth in his testimony.¹ The reaction of the citizens is telling. The bodies of dead men lay on display in a store window until their funeral. The *Epitaph* summed up the feelings of the community.

The funeral of the McLowry brothers and Clanton yesterday was numerically one of the largest ever witnessed in Tombstone. It took place at 3:30 from the undertaking rooms of Messrs. Ritter and Ryan. The procession headed by the Tombstone brass band, moved down Allen Street and thence to the cemetery. The sidewalks were densely packed for two or three blocks. The body of Clanton was in the first hearse and those of the two McLowry brothers in the second, side by side, and were interred in the same grave. It was a most impressive and saddening sight and such a one as it is to be hoped may never occur again in this community.²

Nearly 2,000 people attended the funeral, a testimonial hardly expected for three outlaws. Clum did not recognize the seriousness of the Earps' position, but his ignorance was short-lived. Elections were two months away, and the political climate swung dramatically away from the Earps and their supporters.



Ringo arrived in Tombstone in early November, the *Nugget* of November 8 noting “John Ringo, New Mexico” had arrived at the Grand Hotel. Ringo also missed the coroner’s inquest whose verdict “did not seem to meet with general approval.”³ The *Nugget* was scathing:

The people of this community are deeply indebted to the twelve intelligent men who composed the coroner[']s jury for the valuable information that the three persons who were killed last Wednesday were shot. Some thirty or forty shots were fired, and the whole affair was witnessed by probably a dozen people, and we have a faint recollection of hearing some one say the dead men were shot, but people are liable to be mistaken, and the verdict reassures us. We might have thought they had been struck by lightning or stung to death by hornets, and we never could have told whether they were in the way of the lightning or the lightning was in their way.⁴

It appears Ringo had come to Tombstone over legal issues in the August poker game robbery.⁵ Here Ringo learned the version of the gunfight he believed: Ike Clanton’s. Like Scott Cooley, Ringo remained for the legal hearing being held to determine if the Earps would be tried for murder, or at least part of it. Ike Clanton now looked to Ringo for support and leadership. Ringo left for the San Simon to meet with Joe Olney. On November 25, “Joe Hill, San Simon” registered in the Grand Hotel, along with W. H. Miller of Camp Thomas.⁶ Three days later “J. Ringgold, San Simon” registered at the Grand.⁷ The following day Joe’s brother, George, checked in from the San Simon.⁸

Why Ringo went to get Olney is unknown. One analyst believes that Hill “could have been called as a surprise rebuttal witness for the prosecution.” This was a hearing however, not a trial, where facts are gathered to determine if there is rationale to bring the case to trial.⁹ Hill was miles away at the time of the fight and could offer no first-hand testimony. When he finally arrived in Tombstone, the hearing was nearly concluded.

The Spicer hearing into the deaths of Billy Clanton and the McLaury brothers has been analyzed repeatedly. Earp proponents overlook Spicer’s conflict of interest. He had been the attorney for Kate Holliday and had connections to the Earps. Spicer should have disqualified himself, thus ensuring the accusation of predetermined bias would not taint any decision in the hearing. His subsequent decisions and actions went far beyond unusual.¹⁰ In one of these “unusual” proceedings Spicer “took the extraordinary step of visiting the witness at home,” to interview Addie Bourland, he said, though he could as easily have coached or intimidated her.¹¹ It was a move calculably supportive of the Earps.

Another witness called to defend the Earps was H. F. Sills. An analyst of the hearing believes Sills was “an important defense witness because of his apparent lack of bias,” apparent being the operative word.¹² Sills stated he was a railroad man from Las Vegas, New Mexico, the old stomping grounds of the Earps.¹³ Other members of Hoodoo Brown’s gang were there, including Three Shooter Smith who, curiously, worked for the railroad: “Apparently Three Shooter decided to give honest toil one more chance and returned to his lawful occupation as a railroad brakeman [during 1881]. It would appear that his services were somewhat less than satisfactory: Tom Smith, as he was known to the railroad fraternity, was shortly discharged by Trainmaster Fraley.”¹⁴

There are other aspects of Sills’ testimony that cast doubt on his veracity. Sills stated, “There were four or five men standing near the O.K. Corral together. I think there were four. I saw no horses with those men. I was four or five steps from them. I stayed there probably three

or four minutes.”¹⁵ Throughout the hearing, numerous witnesses testified to the presence of two horses but Sills, from a distance of less than twenty feet, failed to mention them. Minutes later, from yards away, an exchange of shotgun and cane occurred between Virgil and Holliday. “I saw the marshal pick up a shotgun when they started from alongside the building and hand it to Doc Holliday. Doc put it under his coat and the marshal took his cane.”¹⁶ Yet this was the same shotgun Holliday had previously had. Sills further testified that, with guns blazing and people scattering he saw “the marshal changed the cane from one hand to the other” while they were two hundred feet away with their backs turned to him.¹⁷ Still he saw no horses. Behan’s biographer states “The Achilles’ heel of Still’s sworn testimony is elementary; he was tutored incompletely, placing him in an untenable position.”¹⁸ Less charitably, Sills lied for the defense.

Spicer issued an opinion that no case could be made and ordered the Earps and Holliday released. They emerged from the court free men on November 30. “They may not have been completely blameless, but they turned out to be just innocent enough.”¹⁹ More to the point, “Morgan Earp and Doc Holliday, however, had no such humane ideas. They had decided on the way to the vacant lot to kill the ‘cowboys’ and immediately went into action to get the job done.”²⁰ Spicer’s predetermined decision does not answer the question of why they would do such a thing.

The most logical answer yet proposed concerns the murder of Philpott and Roerig. Wyatt approached Ike Clanton for help to kill the robbers. Ike Clanton testified that Wyatt and his brothers were also involved in the robbery.²¹ Will McLaury, who had arrived in Tombstone shortly after the killings and assisted the prosecution, believed that Billy Clanton knew the facts of the robbery and informed Ike and Will’s brothers.²²

Arizona newspapers, Republican and Democratic alike, castigated the Earps. The Prescott *Democrat* called the Earps “Those distinguished swashbucklers [who] honored Prescott with their presence some two years ago,” adding that “the odor of their unsavory reputation still taints the nostrils of our citizens.” The *Miner* stated the Earps had acted “without provocation.”²³ Even Spicer admitted that Virgil Earp acted “incautiously and without due circumspection.”²⁴ “Virgil Earp’s leadership of the Tombstone police force was a disaster.”²⁵ The city council agreed. Earp was suspended as city marshal only days following the shootings. He was not reinstated, essentially being fired.

On November 23, 1881, Ringo was indicted for a felony in district court.²⁶ Ringo surrendered to Deputy Sheriff Dave Neagle. “John Ringold was arrested yesterday by Deputy Sheriff Neagle on an indictment found by the present Grand Jury.”²⁷ The court approved his bond posted by George Hill, Isaac Clanton, James Clark, and William Clark.²⁸ That Clanton and Hill stood bail for Ringo is hardly surprising. James Clark is another matter, as he was a well-known businessman in Tombstone.²⁹

On December 1 Ringo appeared in district court before Judge W. H. Stilwell. His trial for robbing the poker game was set for January 18, 1882. During the proceedings the question of his name arose. When asked if John Ringgold was his true name, Ringo responded that it was not and that his true name was John Ringo.³⁰ On the same day, Dave Estes was indicted in the

same case.³¹ On December 2 Ringo was again in court and indicted on another count of robbery probably relating to the horse that had been taken during the robbery.³² Trial was set for January 23, 1882. Attachments were issued for Roy Stahl, J. Coggsell, Fred Kohl, and Lawson “Loss” Evilsizer.³³

The tide in Tombstone turned against John P. Clum and his faction. Rumors that the Earps would be lynched abounded, and Clum panicked and wired Acting Governor John J. Gosper for weapons. It was easy to gain Gosper’s support by blaming the fictitious “Cowboys” for the threats. Gosper immediately wired President Chester A. Arthur on December 12, 1881.

Following telegram just received from Mayor of Tombstone—“Tombstone Eleventh Dec.—Gov. J. J. Gosper, Prescott. Please send those fifty stands of arms care P. M. Smith soon as possible. John P. Clum.”

Arms will be furnished, and are for use. The committee of safety discharge of the Earps enrages Cow Boys. New dangers apprehended. Give us use of military and we will give you peace on the borders. Public peace in this Territory imperatively demands repeal posse comitatus [sic] act so far as our southern Border is concerned. Our people much pleased with your notice of our troubles.³⁴

Elections were scheduled for January 3, 1882, and the *Epitaph* began a heated campaign to shore up the anti-Cowboy rhetoric, publishing a letter from Joseph Bowyer to Gosper dated September 17, 1881, informing him of the lawlessness that plagued the border. Bowyer makes no mention of the Clantons or McLaurys, but the publication three months after it was sent seemed “to create the impression that, because they lived in the country and dealt in cattle, the Clanton family and McLaury brothers must have been part of the ‘cowboy gang’ Bowyer claimed was ‘mounting deadly raids into Mexico.’”³⁵ The article had no effect, and Clum decided not to run for another term as mayor.

Nor was he in any frame of mind to wait for weapons. As talk of lynching increased, Clum, innocent of anything more serious than yellow journalism, fled to the safety of Washington, D. C. On December 14, two days after his appeal for help, Clum boarded the Kinnear stage for the first leg of the long trip. As the stage neared Malcolm’s water station, gunfire erupted. Clum ran from the coach. Initially he was believed to have been killed but had in fact reached the shelter of the Grand Central Mill. The authorities in Tombstone were notified the terrified mayor was safe.

It has been claimed that the incident was an attempt to kill Clum. “Three of the men who attempted to murder Clum, were Frank Stilwell, John Ringo, and Ike Clanton.”³⁶ The assertion is made without contemporary evidence and overlooks the actual motivation for the attack.

Jimmy Harrington was driving the stage that Clum boarded. The stage carried no treasure and there was no shotgun guard. Behind it was a bullion wagon driven by Dick Wright. Shortly after the wagons left Malcolm’s water station for Contention, a cry of “Halt!” was followed by “a volley of shots evidently aimed at the horses for the purpose of disabling them and thus stopping the coach.”³⁷ One of the lead horses was struck in the neck, and Wright took a bullet in the leg.

In the early hours of December 15, Sheriff Behan led a posse to the site of the bungled holdup attempt. At Contention he learned:

The six-horse coach driven by Jimmy Harrington and the bullion wagon driven by “Whistling Dick” had just left Malcolm’s water station, which is the last house on the road to Contention, and only about four miles from Tombstone and were bowling along at a rapid gait when the order to “Halt” was given from the roadside and almost simultaneously a volley was fired into

them. The off leader of the coach was struck in the neck and all the horses became unmanageable. Dick was hit in the calf of the leg and received a painful flesh wound but kept his seat and his wagon right side up. The horses ran for about half a mile when the wounded one weakened and fell.³⁸

Clum helped cut the horse from its harness. He then reports, “As I looked at the coach with its side-lights I realized that my presence in the coach only jeopardized the other passengers.”³⁹ The *Nugget* provided an uncharitable but accurate account, “As of this writing, 2 A.M., several hours have elapsed, no tidings have been received from him. The prevailing opinion is he is still running.”⁴⁰ Terrified that the robbers were trying to kill him, he fled to the Grand Central where he obtained a horse and rode on to Benson. From there he penned an editorial and forwarded it to the *Epitaph* office.

It is a well known fact that the night stages do not carry either treasure or the mails; therefore the ordinary excuse for plunder cannot be alleged as an incentive to the deed. Since the late unfortunate affair rumors have been rife of the intended assassination of not only the Earp brothers and Holliday, but of Marshal[ly] Williams, Mayor Clum, Judge Spicer and Thomas Fitch. Why the feeling of deadly hatred should exist in relation to the Earps and Holliday everyone here can understand; but as against the others it is one of those inscrutable mysteries that none but the most depraved can possibly assign a reason for.

That the affair of Wednesday night was intended for the murder of John P. Clum, we are fully satisfied.⁴¹

The attempted robbery has similarities to the bungled attempt on the Kinnear stage when Philpott and Roerig were killed. Once again, trigger-happy outlaws botched the attempt with premature and undisciplined gunfire. Despite Clum’s ramblings, the evidence strongly suggests that it was a planned robbery. That none of the shots struck anyone in the coach while one did hit Wright clearly indicates that the bullion wagon was the primary target.

Nonetheless, threats had been made. “Threatening letters have been sent to certain parties with orders to leave town among them sheriff and others well known.”⁴² Two days later Spicer added fuel to the fire in his response to a threatening letter dated December 13, signed by “A. Miner,” and published in the *Epitaph*.

There is a rabble in our city who would like to be thugs, if they had courage; would be proud to be called cow-boys, if people would give them that distinction; but as they can be neither, they do the best they can to show how vile they are, and slander, abuse and threaten everyone they dare to. Of all such I say, that whenever they are denouncing me they are lying from a low, wicked and villainous heart, and that when they threaten me they are low-bred, arrant cowards, and know that “fight is not my racket”—if it was they would not dare to do it.⁴³

From the wording, Spicer apparently believed that the author was Ike Clanton although this was not determined. Like Clum, Spicer did not run for reelection knowing that he could not be elected.

The Earps were also in the news. On December 15, Milton E. Joyce was speaking with Virgil Earp “in regard to the attempted stage robbery of the evening previous.” Joyce made a joke that he had been expecting “something of the sort” since the release of Holliday and the Earps. Virgil “became angry at the remark, and immediately struck Joyce with his open hand in the face.”

The parties were surrounded at the time by four or five of Earp’s warmest partisans, all heavily armed. Taking the situation at a glance, Joyce, with rare good judgment and presence of mind, remarked, that a man would have to be a fool to make a fight single-handed against that crowd, and at the same time commenced backing toward the door. As he reached the door, he said to the Earp party, “Your favorite method is to shoot a man in the back, but if you murder me you will be compelled to shoot me in the front,” and thus saying he stepped upon the sidewalk.⁴⁴

The Earps were cautious, fearing an attack. The fact that the crowd around Virgil Earp was “heavily armed” was a violation of the city gun ordinance, selectively enforced by Virgil, unless he had deputized them with federal authority.

For Dake the murders proved a golden opportunity to forward another request for money. “Yours at the instance of the President received my deputies at Tombstone have struck one effective blow to that element killing three of five. They had threatened the lives of my deputies on sight. Not braver men in Arizona than I have employed with a strong posse I have confidence will drive them from our border. A special allowance for this particular purpose should be made and the paying of actual expenses of posse authorized.”⁴⁵ Gosper also wrote to Phillips, “Marshal Dake has consulted me reference to yours at instance of President. He informs me he must be authorized to employ posse before making expense. I have confidence he can secure proper men if authorized.”⁴⁶ Dake forgot the fact that Virgil Earp, mysteriously absent during the “Cowboy Raid,” was the only deputy involved in the killings as Virgil Earp ignored the fact that his brothers and Holliday were heavily armed in violation of city ordinances. The following day Joyce appeared in the Oriental with a brace of pistols and challenged the Earps and Holliday. Behan took in the situation at once and seized Joyce, hustling him onto the sidewalk and arresting him.⁴⁷

Other outlaws made the news frequently during November and December of 1881. On November 9 two came to grief at Shakespeare, New Mexico, when a mob seized them. The papers reported, “It appears that Bill Littenborn [*sic* : Tettenborn], alias Russian Bill, and Sandy King, two luckless members of the noted cow-boy gang who had recently been arrested for dealing in stolen stock and taken to Shakespeare for trial” were hauled from their cell and summarily hanged.⁴⁸ On December 4, Joe M. “Jake” Gauze, “one of the most noted ‘rustlers’” in southern Arizona was ambushed near Galeyville and hanged.⁴⁹

Not to be outdone, Curly Bill, who had not made Wyatt’s list of enemies at his hearing in November, made news on December 15.

It is rumored, but lacks confirmation, that “Curly” Bill’s crowd, consisting of Lit Moore, Bill [*sic* : Zwing] Hunt, Billy Grounds, alias the “Kid,” Jimmy Hughes and Curly himself, have “gathered together under the leafy boughs of the shady oak” for the last time, in the vicinity of Shakespeare, N. M. We are inclined to doubt this report, from the fact that this gang were seen on the head of the Babacomari less than a week since.⁵⁰

Such was the situation as Christmas approached. It was a time of peace on earth, good will toward men.

Or not.

“Ringo . . . the cowboy leader”

TOMBSTONE LAPSED INTO A PERIOD OF CALM as Christmas passed. The Earps now used Virgil’s federal authority as deputy US marshal to arm their cohorts for protection. Virgil was never reinstated as town marshal. Armed as they were, as days passed without violence, they began to relax their vigilance. These were not men like Scott Cooley, raised in a climate of violence and feud culture. Their backgrounds had not prepared them for what was to come.

Shortly before midnight on December 28, Virgil Earp was walking from the Oriental Saloon to the Cosmopolitan Hotel. As he passed the Eagle Brewery, shotgun fire blossomed from the darkness. The blasts struck his left arm and back. The *Epitaph* reported five shots were fired in quick succession “by unknown men” hidden in the Palace Saloon then being rebuilt. The *Epitaph* speculated three men were involved: “it has been learned that immediately after the shooting three men ran past the ice house on Tough Nut street, and sung out to the man in attendance, who had his door open at the time, ‘Lock your door.’ The same three men were seen by a miner a few moments later making down into a gulch below the Vizina hoisting works.” The paper concluded “there is a band of assassins in our midst, who, having threatened the lives of Judge Spicer, Mayor Clum, Mr. Williams, the Earp brothers and Holliday, have attempted on two occasions to carry their threats into execution, first upon Mayor Clum and second upon Virgil Earp.”¹

Virgil’s left arm was shattered above the elbow and he was struck in the back. His wife Allie rushed to his side. Dr. George Good fellow removed a significant portion of bone from the arm, leaving him permanently crippled.

Although no one was ever convicted in the attack, speculation, much of it wrong, abounds. Bailey, for instance, wrote, “It is surmised that Ike Clanton, ‘Curly Bill’ and [Will] McLaury did the shooting.”² However, Will McLaury had left for Fort Worth two days before the shooting, and Brocius had already left the country.³ Brocius’ biographer notes that from the time of his rumored lynching, no sightings of Curly Bill were noted for the “next two and a half months. . . . Only rumor and innuendo implicate the cowboy in crimes committed during this period.”⁴

As for Clanton, Wyatt later claimed that the Earps “found Ike’s hat near the building.”⁵ A hat was found, but not found by them, and it was never identified as Clanton’s. The newspapers would have covered it if this fiction had any validity. Clanton was provably out of town at the time of the shooting.

“Ringo has often been listed as one of the assailants who ambushed and crippled Virgil Earp on December 28, 1881,” writes one author.⁶ Another lists the assailants as Clanton, Frank Stilwell, John Ringo, Hank Swilling, Pete Spencer, and Johnny Barnes.⁷ None of these men

were identified by any contemporary source. Possibly Milt Joyce was one of the shooters, avenging his personal grudge against Earp, but this is theory, not fact. Several men were suspected at the time, but John Ringo was not one of them. Ringo's whereabouts are uncertain, but he was probably at Joe Hill's ranch where Joe's children fondly recalled him as "Uncle John." No one was ever convicted of the crime.

It was readily apparent that Virgil was critically wounded and might die. He certainly could not appoint special deputies, which meant the Earps would have no authority to carry guns. Being at the mercy of the men who shot their brother was an intolerable situation for the Earps. On December 29, Wyatt sent a telegram to Dake telling him that Virgil had been shot and that his brother's wounds were fatal. He requested a commission with power to appoint deputies. It was a bold move, and it worked.

Yesterday afternoon United States Marshal Dake, who happened to be in this city, received intelligence, by telegraph, of the attempted assassination of his deputy Virgil Earp, at Tombstone, an account of which appears in our dispatch today. As Major Dake's advices were to the effect that Earp's wounds were fatal, he telegraphed an appointment as Deputy Marshal to Wyatt Earp, instructing him to spare no pains or expense in discovering the perpetrators of the deed.⁸

"Now Wyatt had a real badge, the first since he resigned as deputy Pima county sheriff in November 1880."⁹ Exactly who he appointed deputies is unknown, but among those linked closely to him were Doc Holliday, Wyatt's brother Warren, Dan Tipton, Sherman McMaster, "Turkey Creek" Jack Johnson, whose moniker may have been created by Stuart N. Lake, and Texas Jack Vermillion.¹⁰

Holliday's reputation has been documented. Warren Earp, born March 9, 1855, had come to Tombstone following the killings of Clanton and the McLaury brothers. He had already had some shooting trouble, and in 1882 "the Tiger" as one paper nicknamed him "walked lame from the effect of a gun-shot wound."¹¹ Another paper states that Warren was "the most quarrelsome of the Earp brothers."¹² Still another states his escapades were "embarrassing to his family."¹³

Little is known concerning Daniel Gordon Tipton. His biographer refers to his "shadowy role and reputation." Tipton claimed birth in New York during 1844 and may have served aboard the USS *Malvern* during 1864–1865 although this is unverified. At Tombstone he listed himself as a miner in the 1881 Great Register.¹⁴

Wyatt claimed that Sherman McMaster was "one of several informants the Earps had among the rustler crowd."¹⁵ There is no independent corroboration. He was wanted for mule theft, horse theft, and stage robbery along with Pony Diehl. It also appears he was a member of John Kinney's gang of cattle thieves, rapists, and killers. He had served as a Texas Ranger. Unfortunately for Wyatt's assertion, no crimes were prevented or solved based upon information from McMaster or any of those "several informants."

Another "informant," Turkey Creek Jack or Mysterious Johnson as he was known, was born John William Blount on December 9, 1847, near Poplar Bluff, Missouri, to Jacob and Hester Blount.¹⁷ In the early 1870s "the Blount Gang," consisting of John, his brothers Allen (Bud), Samuel and Jacob (Jake), Jim Powell, and George Hudson, "a ruthless Mississippian," was well known.¹⁸

The Blounts' view of law and order is exhibited by the Blount Raid. On January 16, 1877, a

drunken miner named James Messick was arrested. When Bud and John Blount failed to secure his release, they tried to break him out of jail, shooting into the jail before fleeing. Following Messick's legal release, the gang, accompanied by Messick, returned to Webb City "and commenced terrorizing the town." Blount was wounded, although not seriously. The gang returned during the afternoon and shot two peaceful citizens and killed some livestock before being driven from town.¹⁹

These thugs then fled to Arkansas where "they were accused of horse theft." By 1879 they were in Colorado where in June they robbed Henry Shultz and killed another man. Witness J. H. Willard testified, "The reason I did not have this matter prosecuted is that I knew the men that did it, and thought I knew enough to keep my mouth shut and not be killed myself."²⁰ Blount later adopted the alias Johnson.

Vermillion has been identified as John Wilson Vermillion, born to William and Nancy Owens Vermillion in Russell County, Virginia, in 1842. He served in the Confederacy during the war, later surfacing in Dodge City, Kansas. Said to have been a heavy drinker, he was recalled by family members as a violent man, allegedly having killed several men prior to Tombstone. He worked for conman Jefferson "Soapy" Smith as hired muscle. As noted, Wyatt's assertion that some of these men were informants providing valuable information is untrue.

"Dake's appointment of Wyatt Earp as his new deputy did not meet with acclamation in the territory."²¹ Wyatt still had some diehard supporters left, among them George W. Parsons who visited Virgil shortly after he was shot: "Hotel well guarded, so much so that I had hard trouble to get to Earp's room. He was easy. Told him I was sorry for him. 'Its Hell, isn't it!' said he. His wife was troubled, 'Never mind. I've got one arm left to hug you with,' he said."²²

The local elections were on January 3, 1882. The *Epitaph* supported Lewis W. Blinn for mayor and James Flynn for chief of police. Opposed to them were John Carr and Dave Neagle "running on what they called the 'People's Independent Ticket.'"²³ The election was an open referendum on the Earps' actions of the previous October and the *Epitaph's* attempted justification of their actions. "Doc Holliday and the Earps are solid for Blinn and Flynn. So is the Daily Strangler."²⁴ The election results were crushing. John Carr received 830 votes and Blinn 298. Dave Neagle received 590 votes over Flynn's 434. This was not Democratic smear tactics successfully defaming the Earps as charged, for Carr, Neagle, and the councilmen elected were Republicans.²⁵ Parsons mourned the defeat bitterly, noting they were "beaten by the ring and other crowd."²⁶ Shorn of most of their power, the Earps faced the end of their time in Tombstone.

Clum was not the only Earp supporter who fled Tombstone during December 1881. Sarah Josephine Marcus also left in late December or early January.²⁷ Yet despite the citizenry's rebuff, the Earps remained tenaciously in Tombstone, probably because Virgil could not be moved. One Earp biographer believes they stayed because Virgil's attackers were still at large and Wyatt wanted to get them.²⁸ Another asserts, "Wyatt Earp's primary focus became serving as deputy U.S. Marshal."²⁹ He would have his chance. If the Earps truly were receiving inside information from their questionable associates, the first opportunity to put it to use came three days after the election.

On January 6 there was another attack on a stagecoach. W. W. Hubbard and Co.'s stage left Tombstone at eight in the morning, bound for Bisbee. Near Lewis' Spring, six miles from Charleston, five mounted men were seen riding swiftly to intercept the coach. Anticipating trouble, shotgun guard Charles A. Bartholomew procured a Winchester. W. S. Waite continued to drive the stage, which held four passengers: Mrs. J. D. Watson, Col. S. A. Moore, E. T. Hardy, and J. C. Stewart.³⁰ Eight miles from Bisbee three men suddenly appeared on the road about eighty yards from the coach and opened fire. Bartholomew and one passenger leaped from the coach, Bartholomew firing at the robbers. Waite turned the coach and drove some distance before halting to wait for the men.

As soon as Bartholomew and his companion rejoined the coach, Waite whipped up the team while the outlaws thundered in pursuit. The chase lasted about five miles. Bartholomew kept up a steady fire. One of the horses had been wounded, and Waite was forced to stop. "When the stage stopped the rustlers made a circuit around out of rifle distance, and came out on the road ahead, where they met a Mexican wood hauler, whom they compelled to carry a message to the beleaguered passengers."

The robbers demanded the Wells Fargo box and threatened to kill everyone if their demand was not met. Believing resistance futile, the passengers persuaded Bartholomew to quit firing. The robbers netted \$6,500 and stole one of the coach's horses.³¹ It has been asserted that Ringo, Brocius, Stilwell, and Spence were suspects.³² None of this appeared in newspapers, the *Epitaph* reporting that the victims "did not recognize any of them."³³ The *Los Angeles Times*, hundreds of miles from the scene, is cited as evidence that Ringo was suspected of the crime. "No other record has been found linking Ringo to the robbery."³⁴ In fact, none of those named was ever charged in connection with the holdup. One Earp biographer observes Ringo was tried in territorial court on two charges. "This indicates that the crime in question was probably more serious than robbing a poker game."³⁵ The District Court Minutes for Cochise County clearly demonstrate that these charges were filed a month before the robbery, however.³⁶

Earp sources may have dried up on this holdup, but a chance for redemption came on January 7 when two robbers hit the Sandy Bob stage driven by Jack Sheldon halfway between Benson and Tombstone. The nine passengers were robbed of around \$75 and three pistols. The robbers demanded the Wells Fargo box, but there was no treasure on board. Fred Dodge later claimed that passenger James Hume gave such an accurate description of the robbers that he could have named the men.³⁷ This is not reflected by the *Epitaph*. "Both the robbers were well disguised with black cloth masks."³⁸ Once again the "informants" failed the Earps.

This robbery, like the one McMaster and Diehl were wanted for in 1880 and that Spence and Stilwell were charged with, bear marked similarities. A pair of well-organized highwaymen had struck the coach. No one was hurt, and they were not novices. It appears possible that the same outlaws committed all the robberies.

For John Ringo, the Earps represented justice thwarted and power abused. He understood clearly that the cycle of revenge had begun and that his part in it was inescapable. Area ranchers looked to Ringo for leadership due to the inflated reputation he brought with him from Texas, even as he deteriorated mentally. Friends would later recall that his mental state made

him “subject to frequent fits of melancholy” and that he was “certain of being killed.”³⁹ He was drawn into a situation over which he had no control.

Ringo’s next appearance in court was scheduled for January 18, 1882, and he fully intended to make his appearance. On January 17 Ringo spotted “the Earps,” Doc Holliday, and other members of the Earp gang and resolved to give Wyatt a chance to prove his courage. Walking up to the group he cordially invited Wyatt to step into the street and draw. Earp refused, but Holliday was game. Only the intervention of policeman James Flynn averted shooting. Parsons wrote that Ringo and Holliday came close to shooting it out. “I passed both not knowing blood was up. One with hand in breast pocket, and the other probably ready. Earps just beyond.”⁴⁰

A difficulty occurred yesterday afternoon in front of the Occidental Saloon, Allen street, between John Ringo and Doc Holliday, that very nearly terminated in bloodshed. The parties had been on bad terms for some time past, and meeting yesterday morning words were exchanged and both parties stepped back, placing their hands on their weapons with the intention of drawing and using them. Fortunately chief of police Flynn was at hand and placed both parties under arrest. They were taken to Judge Wallace’s court and fined \$32 each for carrying deadly weapons. Some little occurrence, which fortunately died out before anything serious occurred. The streets were crowded at the time, and had the shooting commenced it is probable that more than one life would have paid the penalty and another serious tragedy enacted on our street.⁴¹

Flynn arrested Wyatt Earp in addition to Ringo and Holliday. The *Epitaph* did not report the story although it did report Wallace’s decision. “J. H. Holliday, Wyatt Earp, Ringo, arrested for carrying concealed weapons. Earp discharged, Holliday and Ringo fined \$30 each.”⁴² Earp’s discharge was a matter of course, as he was a deputy US marshal.

Proponents of Earp postulate that Wyatt refused the fight because he intended to run for sheriff in the fall—an unconvincing theory since his portion of the Republican party had just been crushed in the city elections. Regardless, the citizens’ thoughts on the near gunfight are clear. Hancock wrote, “Ringo gave those fellows every opportunity to fight it out but when he found them to be only a bunch of cowards he ignored them.”⁴³ Certainly it speaks of Ringo’s courage that he would challenge four or more armed men.

It was not the only time Ringo offered to fight Earp and his cronies. Hancock recalled that “It was no swashbuckling on John’s part. He told them what he thought of them and what they were and they took it.”⁴⁴ This assertion is supported by family recollections that Joe Hill saw Ringo challenge Wyatt with knives. “Wyatt went pale and backed out of the saloon.”⁴⁵ Another Tombstone resident recalled that Ringo made the Earps “take water in their dumps in Tombstone, when Fred Ward and Bull Lewis went into the saloon and led Ringo out telling him the Earps would shoot him in the back.”⁴⁶

Ringo appeared in court on January 18. His trial was reset for February 1, 1882, when none of the witnesses appeared.⁴⁷ On January 24, he appeared in court on the second robbery charge. The court ruled his bond was insufficient and a new one required.⁴⁸ Breakenridge reports that John Dunbar, Al Woods, and “one of Ringo’s gambler friends were ready to sign it.”⁴⁹ On January 23, when Ringo’s lawyer arrived at the jail and advised that the bond had been approved, Breakenridge permitted Ringo to take his guns and leave town based upon that mistaken belief.⁵⁰ The same day, James Earp swore out an affidavit against Ringo, charging that on January 23 he had seen Ringo escape from the sheriff without any approved bond. The

purpose of Ringo's "escape," he said, was to intercept "Wyatt S. Earp a marshal intrusted with the execution of warrants for the arrest of diverse persons charged with violations of the laws of the territory."⁵¹ A posse started in pursuit. Parsons was again called out to serve on a posse: "Was routed out of bed night before last to help get a horse for posse which left about 4:00 a.m. for Charleston to rearrest Ringo. Jack [John Henry Jackson] headed them and they had quite an experience but no shooting. The Earps are out too on U.S. business and lively times are anticipated."⁵²

While Ringo was in jail, Wyatt took the opportunity to lead a posse toward Charleston armed with assorted warrants. Dake instructed him that funds were to be confined to federal matters such as the pursuit of outlaws that attacked stages carrying mail or trans-border raiders. His actual purpose was to find "Ike and Phin Clanton, whom he suspected of ambushing his brother Virgil."⁵³ Intriguingly, Mayor John Carr felt the need to issue a proclamation supporting the Earps. "I am informed by His Honor, William H. Stilwell, Judge of the district Court of the First Judicial District, Cochise county, that Wyatt S. Earp, who left the city yesterday with a posse, was intrusted with warrants for the arrest of divers persons charged with criminal offenses. I request the public within this city to abstain from any interference with the execution of said warrants."⁵⁴

Obviously he had no hope that John Ringo would abide by the proclamation, or even could since he did not know of it. Moreover the document is clearly addressed to the "public within this city," a further indication that support for these gunmen had waned. It was echoed ominously by Parsons. "Something brewing in town. Trouble ahead."⁵⁵

Trouble was brewing in Tombstone, and all of it boded ill for the Earps.

“Blood will surely come”

THE REPUTATION RINGO BROUGHT FROM TEXAS is evident in existing documents. Obviously James Earp was frightened that Ringo would find his brothers. The *Epitaph* echoed this. “Later in the day two parties are said to have gone in pursuit of the deputy marshal and his posse, threatening vengeance for an act in which the above official was concerned some time since. What the result will be can only be surmised.” The paper attacked Behan’s office for releasing Ringo without an approved bond. “The facts are stubborn and plain, but no more than is the duty of every good citizen to do their utmost to see that the full intent of the proclamation is carried out and that the orders of the court are sustained.”¹

The first party was John Ringo. This lone man inspired such concern that the *Epitaph* called upon residents to protect Earp and his posse. The second party was John Henry Jackson’s posse which was pursuing Ringo. His posse headed for Charleston expecting to find both Ringo and the Earps. Instead they ran into trouble. On January 24 Jackson arrived at Charleston “and after leaving their arms at a convenient place proceeded to the Occidental hotel to get their breakfast. Upon passing the threshold they were intercepted by Isaac Clanton and another man with drawn weapons, while the barrels of other Winchesters suddenly gleamed over the adobe wall. Mr. Jackson stated his errand.”

Clanton told them that Ringo “had always acted the gentleman toward him.” Through Clanton’s efforts it was arranged that Ringo would return to Tombstone. “The posse returned to town about four o’clock, the intent of their mission having been achieved by the voluntary act of Ringo.” The posse reported about twenty-five armed men with Clanton.²

The Earps’ location was unknown. They had not reached Charleston. Another party thundered out of Tombstone on January 25 apparently to back up Earp’s posse. Realizing that the situation had escalated beyond reason, the *Nugget* reported that the posse of “thirty armed men” allegedly on the authority of Dake “for the purpose of assisting the Earp party . . . is but in keeping with the previous injudicious action that has marked the whole affair.” The paper added that it was not known “for whom or out of what court the warrants said to be in Earp’s hands” were issued, then summarized the opinion of most of Tombstone.

If there had then been resistance offered, it would have been high time to inaugurate such a system as the situation would demand. But we, in common with a majority of citizens, do not believe that the party or parties whom these forty or fifty men have gone to arrest have resisted or evaded arrest, which is more than can be said of some who compose the Earp posse.³

The Earps finally reached Charleston. They had camped only three miles from Tombstone the day of their departure waiting for reinforcements before proceeding to Charleston. “After the two parties had joined forces on Wednesday night, they started in a body for Charleston, feeling the utmost confidence in their ability to overpower at least one-fourth of their number

of the dreaded enemy. It should be stated, however, that the thirty extra deputies who left here on the night in question had been more than ordinarily successful in their QUEST OF THE 'FLOWING BOWL,' and as a consequence the majority of them were chuck full of courage which might account for their self-confidence.”⁴

At Charleston the Earps encountered Ben Maynard.⁵ Maynard had had trouble with Lou Rickabaugh, an Earp partisan and partner with Earp in a gambling concession. They had “tried to kick each other’s lungs out” on January 17, the same day that Ringo challenged the Earps in Tombstone.⁶ The Earps disarmed Maynard despite the fact that they held no warrants for him. Thus began the assault on Charleston. Maynard was “used as a human shield for the Earps.”⁷ The cowardly posse forced Maynard at gunpoint to knock on the doors of any building they thought “might afford concealment or shelter for any of the cowboys.” The Earps told the innocent Maynard that if anyone fired at them he would “not last as long as a snowball in hell.” Maynard was finally released when the out-of-control posse failed to find the Clantons.⁸

The Earps did not capture any outlaws but did succeed in capturing Deputy Sheriff S. H. Sperry. Sperry was detained and harassed before being released. They then intercepted a Mexican wrangler, for whom they held no warrant, and disarmed him.

In Tombstone, Maynard went to Judge William H. Stilwell intending to swear out a warrant “for the parties who had threatened and otherwise maltreated him.” Stilwell refused to let him do so although Mayor Carr and Tombstone’s citizens were outraged. The Earps also succeeded in alienating the people of Charleston, with forty to fifty gunmen “patrolling” their small town. Angry citizens telegraphed Tombstone.

CHARLESTON, A. T., January 26.—To J. H. BEHAN, Sheriff of Cochise County—DEAR SIR: Doc Holliday, the Earps, and about 40 or 50 more of the filth of Tombstone are here, armed with Winchester rifles and revolvers, and patrolling our streets, as we believe, for no good purpose. Last night and today they have been stopping good, peaceable citizens on all roads leading to our town, nearly paralyzing the business of our place. We know of no authority under which they are acting. Some of them, we believe, are thieves, robbers, and murderers. Please come here and take them where they belong.

CHARLESTONIAN⁹

This was not new to John Ringo. Sheriff John Clark had seized Loyal Valley and terrorized it although no outlaws were in his posse. The names had changed, but the tactics of intimidation and terror were the same. While the posse terrorized Charleston, the Clantons sent word to town that they “would surrender to either the city or county officials. They assign as a reason for not submitting to the Earp party the belief that after being disarmed they would be murdered.”¹⁰ On January 30 they surrendered peacefully to a posse led by J. H. Jackson and Charles Bartholomew. “It was represented that the parties for whom warrants were issued had a well grounded fear that it was not for the purpose of getting them to answer the charges but for the purpose of committing a grave offense upon the accused.”¹¹ It was undoubtedly a wise decision.

Such events did not go unnoticed. “The Earps and a desperado named Doc Hol[l]iday are running things with a high hand at Tombstone, Arizona.”¹² The *Optic*, familiar with Hoodoo Brown’s gang, offered:

HOLLIDAY’S HIGH HANDED HOODOO.

Doc Holliday and the Earp boys are at it again in Arizona, and are acting a great deal worse than they ever dared to carry on

in Las Vegas. The other day these frontier terrors got acquainted with Uncle Sam and gained his affections sufficiently to secure the appointment to positions called United States Marshals. Under this coat of authority, they swooped down on a little camp called Charleston and raise the awfulest din the poor people had ever listened to. There were forty men in the party and they felt that they could stand off a regiment of cavalry. They found no cowboys, but had lots of fun.¹³

The citizens of Tombstone saw little humor in any of it, particularly when posseman Sherman McMaster was arrested by Deputy Sheriff Dave Neagle for horse theft.¹⁴

Earp enthusiasts denounce the Charleston siege telegram as a fake. Clara Brown confirms it was not, writing, “the cowboys made night hideous by discharging rifles and pistols incessantly.”¹⁵ Brown blamed “cowboys,” but the only gang in Charleston was the Earp posse. Parsons confirmed the raid’s impact on Charleston and the fact that there were no cowboys in the small town. “Met the Earp posse on outskirts Charleston returning to town, their parties having surrendered at Tombstone. . . . Charleston looked almost like a deserted village and as though having undergone a siege.”¹⁶

Supporters of Earp portray Parsons as an impartial observer, ignoring his hatred of the Democrats and whole-hearted support of all things Republican that colored his view of the Earps. By his own admission, he believed only the worst of Democrats, particularly those from the South.

Garfield I hope is the coming man because in my judgment he represents the best interests of the country. The Republican party saved it and must perpetuate it. It is too soon to trust it to the hands of the party seeking its destruction 17 years ago. I have some fears of a solid south from the action of that south. . . . The old issues are not forgotten. I can now see the hollowness of Southern Chivalry. . . . What other government under heaven would have granted Amnesty to its traitors. . . . The south broke the law but didn’t suffer the penalty it should have.¹⁷

Given this distrust, his journal entry is credible. The Earps had terrorized Charleston.

On January 27 John Ringo was in court and the robbery indictment was read to him. He was given the opportunity to enter a plea or enter a demurrer. Counsel interposed a demurrer that was set for February 2. Bail was set in both cases in the amount of \$3,000.¹⁸ On January 31 he was freed on bail once more.¹⁹ Other court matters also took place. The Clanton brothers were hauled before Judge Stilwell on suspicion they had shot Virgil Earp. District Attorney William Herring asked for a bail of \$5,000 each, but Stilwell released both men on \$1,500 each indicating that the prosecution had no solid evidence on either man, certainly not a hat with Ike Clanton’s name on it.²⁰ McMaster was also released on \$1,000 bail.²¹

While Wyatt terrorized Charleston, Dake felt the need to hold a public meeting to select a new deputy US marshal for Cochise County on January 31. The committee recommended John H. Jackson and Silas Bryant for consideration. The *Epitaph* stated that “the public will have equal confidence in either one that may be appointed.” The same day the *Epitaph* published a letter from Virgil and Wyatt Earp tendering their resignation as federal marshals.²² “Dake refused Wyatt Earp’s resignation.”²³ He apparently must have refused Virgil’s as well, for as late as February 28 the *Nugget* noted that Dake had not removed either Earp from his roster although John H. Jackson had received the appointment.²⁴

Around this time Marshall Williams, “the trusted and respected Wells, Fargo agent,” fled Tombstone.²⁵ Wells Fargo had discovered that he had altered the books, and Williams fled with a prostitute and embezzled funds while leaving roughly \$8,000 in unpaid debts behind

him. Hard on the resignation of the Earps, Williams' flight prompted Arizona papers to "Wonder if the resignation of the Earps did not have something to do with his sudden departure."²⁶ One biographer acknowledges that Williams had tipped off some stage robbers.²⁷

On February 2, 1882, the Clanton brothers appeared before Judge William H. Stilwell charged with the attempted murder of Virgil Earp. "J. W. Bennett was called and stated that he had found a hat in the building."²⁸ No mention of any name was made. "Such powerful evidence would have been ballyhooed in the *Epitaph* if it had been produced in court."²⁹ Ike Clanton proved an alibi, although one witness, an accused horse thief and stage robber, has character flaws that leave his veracity open to question. "Sherman McMasters was sworn, and said that he was at Charleston on the night of the shooting, and that [Ike] Clanton was there. Witness asked Clanton about the shooting at which Clanton replied that he 'would have to go back and do the job over.'" Other, more credible witnesses "testified that defendants were in Charleston at the time" Virgil was shot.³⁰ These witnesses were noted as "Messrs. McKelyar, Mandy, Russell, [Jeptha Bennett] Ayres, Clark, Conwell and Frost."³¹ The Clantons were released. It was the last hearing relating to the attempted assassination of Virgil Earp. The men responsible were never identified except in the fiction that has grown up in the region.

Also on February 2, the *Tombstone Daily Nugget* reported that Wyatt held out the proverbial olive branch to Ike Clanton, sending him a note that he wanted to reconcile their differences and end the animosity between them. How Wyatt intended to do this is open to speculation, but Ike declined. On February 9 he filed charges at Contention City against the Earps and Holliday for the murder of his brother. John Behan arrested Wyatt and Morgan Earp along with Holliday.³² Their hearing was scheduled for February 14.

On the fourteenth, Behan took the Earps to Contention for their hearing. The case was transferred back to Tombstone and set for February 15. Here the men were released on a writ of *habeas corpus* because the arrest warrants "were no longer valid because he [Justice Smith] had not committed the defendants to jail after transferring the case to Tombstone."³³

On the same day Dan Tipton attempted to kill Ben Maynard, but was prevented by the intervention of the town's police:

Bad time on street today. Policeman just prevented Ben Maynard and [Dan] Tipton from shooting one another. Yesterday Earps were taken to Contention to be tried for killing of Clanton. Quite a posse went out. Many of Earp's friends accompanied armed to the teeth. They came back later in day, the good people below beseeching them to leave and try case here. A bad time is expected again in town at any time. Earps on one side of street with their friends and Ike Clanton and Ringo with theirs' on the other side—watching each other. Blood will surely come.³⁴

Two days later Wyatt again fielded a posse.

Wyatt and Morgan Earp, Doc Holliday, "Texas Jack [Vermillion],"—[Six Shooter?] Smith, McMasters, and one or two others left the city yesterday afternoon for—where, no one apparently knows, but when in the vicinity of Waterville, they separated, four of the party going in the direction of San Simon Valley, to arrest, it is claimed, Poney Dehl [*sic* : Pony Diehl] and one or two other well known characters, and the remainder to Charleston. It is supposed they are acting in the capacity of U.S. Deputy Marshals, their resignations not having been accepted by U.S. Marshal Dake, as was generally supposed some time ago.³⁵

Spicer had issued warrants for Diehl, Al Tiebot, and Charles Hawes whom Charles Bartholomew named as the highwaymen involved in the January 6 robbery.³⁶ Diehl and the

others were not in Cochise County, however. The warrants had been prepared to facilitate the transfer of these men from Cisco, Texas.³⁷ Earp's biographer comments that capturing Diehl was not Wyatt's object, adding, "true to form, Wyatt came back from this foray with nothing in hand other than some additional expense vouchers."³⁸ Mayor Carr had earlier assessed the situation correctly. "The Mayor suggests as a possible cause of the organization of the posse the fact that several thousand dollars are deposited in the hands of the United States Marshal, and the posse is used as an expedient to absorb this amount."³⁹ This was a harsh criticism, but worse was to come for Dake who was soon under investigation for gross malfeasance. One historian writes, "few citizens considered Dake 'fit' for office. . . . [Agent S. R.] Martin added that Dake seldom had funds for office and had retained as a deputy a known outlaw, Wyatt Earp."⁴⁰ Dake kept no records and, aside from haranguing Washington for more money, did nothing to maintain law and order in the territory. "It is no small irony that during the period 1878–1882 the most notable thief in Arizona in terms of dollars stolen was the Earps' boss, U.S. Marshal Crawley Dake, not Curly Bill or some other 'cowboy.'" Dake had taken \$50,000, roughly equivalent to a million dollars in today's funds.⁴¹ As for Earp's latest foray, "No fights with outlaws took place; no one was arrested; no loot recovered—he invariable outcome of Wyatt's scouting trips during his so-called 'war' against the 'cowboys.'"⁴² Sheriff John Behan and his deputies, charged with being in league with the criminal element, made far more arrests than Wyatt Earp's posses did despite their alleged "informants."

John Ringo made another court appearance on February 2. The case was continued when no witnesses appeared.⁴³

Parsons' prediction that "Blood will surely come" proved prophetic. Only one side could remain in Cochise County, and by March the citizens had had enough. Living in fear of the Earps and convinced that legal justice was impossible, they resorted once more to the gun.

“his band of questionable repute”

MARCH FOUND VIRGIL'S CONDITION IMPROVING. With Williams' departure, stage robberies dropped away. Additionally there was a dramatic decrease in reports of the ever-elusive “Cowboy” gang. “There being a lull in cowboy criminality (which we will hope is something more than temporary), and the Indians apparently having left the Dragoons, Tombstone people have been obliged to look to other causes for excitement.”¹ Brown ascribed the decrease to the presence of C. P. Dake although it was actually due to Clum's departure. Leigh Chalmers reported that Dake confessed to having received a \$3,000 Wells Fargo loan, “under false and fraudulent representations.” Dake deposited the money in Wyatt Earp's account. Earp had spent most of that in pursuing “Cowboys” fruitlessly. “Dake spent some \$300 of that sum in a drunken celebration with the posse in the sporting houses [brothels] of that notorious community.”²

On March 18, Wyatt Earp encountered Ringo's attorney, Briggs Goodrich. Earp told Goodrich that he thought “they were after us last night” asking if Goodrich knew anything concerning a possible attack. Goodrich did not, but added that Ringo had asked Goodrich to inform Wyatt Earp “that if any fighting came up between you all that he wanted you to understand he would have nothing to do with it; that he was going to look out for himself, and everybody else could do the same.”³ Coming from Ringo, an avowed enemy, the message indeed should have raised suspicions. “Ringo's comments suggest that he may have known someone was going to make an attempt to murder the Earps, but he wanted none of it.”⁴ Ringo's message was intended as a warning, obvious enough for anyone with the sense to heed it. Seemingly oblivious to the increasingly ugly atmosphere surrounding them, the Earps took no precautions other than maintaining their cadre of armed minions around them. Ringo's warning heightened suspicion that he played a role in the subsequent events.

The same night violence again struck the Earp family. At around eleven Morgan Earp and Bob Hatch were playing billiards at Campbell & Hatch's. Morgan “was standing with his back to the glass door in the rear of the room” leading to an alley when he was shot in the back. “At the time the shot was fired the deceased must have been standing within ten feet of the door, and the assassin standing near enough to see his position, took aim for about the middle of his person, shooting through the upper portion of the whitened glass. The bullet entered the right side of the abdomen, passing through the spinal column, completely shattering it.”⁵

A second shot was fired at Wyatt. Old-timers informed one local historian that the vigilantes drew lots from a hat to decide who would kill the Earps. One of them had a black cross on it. “He was a man of such integrity that he went unnoticed and unsuspected in the ensuing stampede to get out of the line of fire.”⁶ If true, the assertion is of great importance. Certainly

there were vigilantes in Tombstone, but none of those named in connection with the murder was “of such integrity” that they would go unnoticed.

“Poor Morgan Earp was shot through by an unknown party. Probably two or three in number in Campbell and Hatch’s, while playing pool with Hatch.” While Parsons is cited as typical testament of local sympathy, others not aligned with the Earps took scant notice at the time. Endicott Peabody, a recent arrival from Massachusetts wrote, “Morgan Earp was murdered last night while playing billiards in Saloon.”⁷

One of the Earps—a family conspicuous for their fighting qualities, was shot in the back while playing billiards in a saloon on the main street. The poor fellow was not killed immediately & suffered frightfully but never uttered a groan. His last sentence was, “Well Jim, that’s the last game I will ever play.” Fancy a man saying such a thing at such a time. It may seem a certain daring but it argues a sad want of any kind of religious feeling or unsaid human feeling for his wife & family that are in California.⁸

H. M. Matthews empanelled a jury to investigate the murder. Surprisingly, the inquest named five men as being involved: Pete Spence, Frank Stilwell, John Doe Freis (Frederick Bode), an Indian or half-breed named Charlie, and another Indian, name unknown. The jury named them largely on the testimony of Marietta Spence, Pete’s wife, who said they had all been at her home the night of the killing. Marietta also testified that her husband beat her and her mother.⁹ One writer adds the undocumented detail that Ringo held the assassins’ horses and that Stilwell claimed to have been the triggerman.¹⁰ Earp later informed Walter Noble Burns that Brocius, Ringo, Stilwell, Hank Swilling, and Florentine Cruz killed his brother.¹¹ If all of these men were actually involved, there were nine men firing two shots, Hank Swilling being the unnamed “Indian.” Given Wyatt’s lack of veracity, the movements of these men must be examined in minute detail.¹²

Some of these men can be readily discounted. Ringo was accused by no contemporary source despite the evidence provided by Goodrich that he may have known that something was up. Earp may have believed Ringo was involved, but belief is not factual evidence. Goodrich’s statement was discounted by the coroner’s jury as irrelevant.

The Earps and their “band of questionable repute” now left Tombstone.¹³ At Contention City the party boarded a train bound for Tucson where they encountered Frank Stilwell. Armed with breech-loading shotguns, Wyatt and Warren Earp, Doc Holliday, Sherman McMaster, and John Blount (Johnson) pursued Stilwell up the railroad tracks and murdered him.

Earp claimed in the *Denver Republican* on May 14, 1893, that he “ran straight for Stilwell.” The murder was quick. “As I rushed upon him he put out his hands and clutched at my shotgun. I let go both barrels, and he tumbled down dead and mangled at my feet.”¹⁴ This appears to be a clear admission that he alone killed Stilwell, but once again Wyatt’s veracity is called into question. Three years later he informed the San Francisco *Examiner*, “But even at the depot I was forced to fight Ike Clanton and four or five of his friends who had followed us to do murder. One of them, named Frank Stilwell, who was believed to be Morgan’s murderer, was killed by my gun going off when he grasped it.”¹⁵ None of this agrees with either eyewitnesses or contemporary documents. Had Stilwell been a threat to them, the Earps could have claimed self-defense. Instead the gang fled into the night.

Other descriptions of the encounter were published. The *Epitaph* reported that on the

evening of March 20, Morgan Earp's body had arrived in Tucson, accompanied by Wyatt, Virgil and Warren Earp, Doc Holliday, Sherman McMaster, and "Turkey Creek Jack" Johnson. The party was "heavily armed with shotguns and revolvers." Stilwell and Ike Clanton were at the depot to meet Deputy Sheriff Milt McDowell who was a witness before the grand jury. They saw the Earps on the platform, and "Stilwell advised Clanton to leave at once saying they wanted to kill him [Clanton]." ¹⁶

The report establishes that Clanton was "in Tucson for over two weeks." He was there to meet Milt McDowell, a witness in the trial of Jerry Barton. Stilwell, also a witness in the Barton case, met him by chance. The *Arizona Star* reported that the Earps were "following along after Stillwell, he continuing to move in that direction, as that was the only way he could go without facing the armed crowd. Soon several shots were fired in rapid succession, a loud scream following the first shot, given, it was supposed by Stilwell."

Bystanders were warned back "by the crowd of shooters." ¹⁷ On the morning of March 21, Stilwell's body was found in the railroad yard. The *Epitaph* makes it clear that the killing resembled a gangland hit. "Four of the armed men who were on the platform soon followed. One was described as a slender, light complexioned man wearing a white hat. Just as the train was leaving six shots were heard in the locality of the assassination, but attracted no particular attention and nothing was known of the tragedy until this morning when the body was discovered." Stilwell had been shot six times: four rifle balls and two loads of buckshot. One charge of buckshot that had been fired through his breast "must have been delivered close, as the coat was powder burnt, and six buckshot holes within a radius of three inches. Stilwell had a pistol on his person which was not discharged. He evidently was taken unaware." ¹⁸

Saloon operator George Hand confirmed the involvement of multiple murderers. "Frank Stilwell was shot all over, the worst shot-up man that I ever saw." ¹⁹ "One load of buckshot had entered into the left breast and ranging downward, had passed out the back. A bullet, evidently that of a pistol or rifle, has passed through the fleshy part of the left arm and entered the body just below the armpit, and passing directly through, came out in line of entrance under the right arm into which it lodged. Another load of eleven buckshot had shattered the left leg above the knee and one bullet had gone through, and into the calf of the left leg, while still another bullet, evidently a downward shot, entered the right leg above the knee, passed through, and into the calf of the left leg." ²⁰ Warrants were issued for Wyatt and Warren Earp, Sherman McMaster, Doc Holliday, and Johnson. ²¹ "By Wyatt Earp's own admission, he shot a man begging for his life." ²²

Some writers ignore the facts and insist Stilwell intended to kill the Earps. Had the shooting been self defense, Earp could have surrendered and been cleared. "They [the Earps] are now in Dragoons waiting until ascertd. (ascertained) whether sufficient evidence abt. (about) them in Tucson for murdering Stillwell. If not they will give themselves up. Otherwise they will leave the territory." ²³

Was Stillwell the man who murdered Morgan Earp? On May 27, 1882, the *San Francisco Examiner* published a statement by Virgil Earp. "Before Stilwell died he confessed he killed Morg, and gave the names of those who were implicated with him." This was too much even for the *Epitaph*. "Without any desire to irritate Mr. Earp, we nevertheless cannot help

expressing astonishment that a man with two pounds of buckshot in his stomach, four bullets in his heart, and his face mutilated by lead beyond recognition, could have had either time or inclination to make any statement whatever.”²⁴

Stilwell’s prior movements are well documented. On March 19 he arrived at Tucson to appear before the grand jury.²⁵ He checked into the Palace Hotel at five a.m. This means that if he had killed Morgan Earp he had only six hours to ride nearly seventy-five miles through the desert at night. Marietta Spence placed him in Tombstone at midnight, further reducing his flight time to five hours. A member of the American Endurance Racing Association stated bluntly that such a ride was impossible.²⁶ Upon reaching Tucson he would have had to immediately find someone who knew him to provide an alibi. Indeed, had he needed an alibi, Stilwell could simply have some of the “Cowboys” lie for him much closer to home. The *Arizona Daily Star* reported it was “extremely improbable” that Stilwell had been involved in Morgan Earp’s murder, “credible parties” testifying that he had been in Tucson at the time playing cards with “reputable men.”²⁷

So, all unbiased evidence confirms the impossibility of Stilwell’s involvement in Morgan Earp’s murder. Wyatt Earp and his trigger-happy outlaw gang had inaugurated his trail of bloody revenge with the murder of a man not involved in Morgan’s murder.

On the afternoon of March 21 the Earps returned to Tombstone and began to gather what they needed before making a run for it.²⁸ Meanwhile Bob Paul wired warrants for the arrest of the Earp gang to Behan.²⁹ The gang fled Tombstone when Behan attempted to arrest them.³⁰

On March 22, Behan took a posse in pursuit. Parsons angrily noted, “Sheriff went out with a posse supposedly to arrest the Earp party, but they will never do it. The cowboy element is backing him strongly, John Ringo being one of the party. There is a prospect of a bad time and there are about three men who deserve to get it in the back of the neck.”³¹

Earp apologists charge that Behan’s posse was composed of outlaws. One classifies it as “one of the true oddities” of the time, noting Behan was backed by “Ringo, Fin Clanton, and other members of the cowboy-outlaw crowd.”³² Holliday’s biographer adds they included “a dozen Charleston-based Cow-Boys that numbered Curly Bill, John Ringo, and Fin Clanton among them.”³³ Others add such men as the Lyle brothers, Frank Patterson, Jim Hughes, Hank Swilling, Ike Clanton, Rattlesnake Bill Johnson and Pony Diehl. Thorough research establishes the actual composition of the Behan posse.

On April 2, 1882, Behan filed his expense voucher naming the entire posse. They included Lance Perkins, Harry Woods, P. (Phineas) Clanton, John Barnes, George Hill, J. Ringold (*sic*: John Ringo), Billy Moore, W. Barrige, William Morton, E. Brown, Jim Potter, Ed Miner, _____ Burke, John Gillespie, E. H. Allen, J. Lyons, Alex Wichert, Ed Trable, W. Miller, Geo. Ellis, Hank Grinnel, William G. Richards, Walter Coleman, Phil Montague and Carl Stramblade.³⁴ Some are barely known today, but for those whose data has been discovered the true nature of the posse can be determined.

Ringo and Clanton need no introduction. Among the others, some were duly appointed lawmen such as Lanson Warden “Lance” Perkins, Massachusetts-born Edward Hugh Allen, Harry Woods, and Burke, who served as a deputy sheriff at Willcox. Walter Coleman was a miner, the son of Ruben Coleman.³⁵ So too was John Gillespie. John Barnes, age twenty, was a

New Mexico-born wrangler listed as one of the Cowboys.³⁶ George Hill was a younger brother of Joe Hill, better known under his real name of George Anderson Olney. He later ran for the governorship of Arizona and was a successful businessman. Willard K. “Billy” Moore was a part-time Spanish teacher.³⁷ W. Miller may have been either William N. Miller, a miner, or William C. Miller, a stockman living at Charleston. Considering the relative merits of both parties, Behan had a far more ethical group.

The Earps paused at Pete Spence’s wood camp the morning of March 22. “Wyatt and Warren Earp, Doc Holliday, McMasters, Texas Jack and Johnson” asked about Pete Spence and Indian Charley. Theodore Judah told them that Spence was in Tombstone and “that a Mexican named Florentine [Cruz] was looking for some stock.”

A few minutes later ten or twelve shots were heard. Florentine not returning, this morning Judah proceeded in search of him and found the body not far from camp, riddled with bullets. Judah immediately came to town with the news. He states that had the sheriff’s posse come a mile further they would have had all the information they wanted.³⁸

Woodcutter Epimania Vegas testified that Cruz was running from his attackers. The coroner confirms this. Florentine Cruz was shot ten or twelve times, all in the back.³⁹

It was big news. The most surprised man might have been Indian Charley. On March 30, 1882, the *Arizona Daily Star* reported two stories from Tombstone, one stating that Indian Hank (Swilling) had been captured. The other, and apparently correct story, originated with the on-the-scene *Epitaph*, which reported that the day after the Earps murdered Florentine Cruz “Deputy Sheriff Bell arrived from Charleston today in charge of Indian Charlie, charged with the murder of Morgan Earp.”⁴⁰

Earp apologists insist that Cruz was Indian Charlie for obvious reasons: if Cruz was not Indian Charlie the Earps had murdered a second innocent man. But who was Florentine Cruz if not Indian Charley, and why was he killed? Was it simply a case of mistaken identity? Or was Cruz the unidentified woodcutter who could place some of the gang members at the scene of the January 6 stage robbery? At that time newspapers reported that the robbers “met a Mexican wood-hauler, whom they compelled to carry a message” to the stage.⁴¹

Contemporary evidence confirms that Cruz was not a desperado. J. S. Browder said he found Cruz “to be a harmless and inoffensive man.”⁴² Once again the Earps had killed an innocent man, raising murders to two. “No proof that Florentino Cruz was, in fact, Indian Charlie, has ever been found.”⁴³ At the same time, Spence and Bode were taken into custody.

The *Epitaph*, now desperate to somehow justify two brutal and cowardly murders, was presented with a unique opportunity on March 25 when a report that the Earps had killed Curly Bill arrived in Tombstone. The “Battle of Burleigh,” as it was called, described how Curly Bill and eight “cowboys” had ambushed the Earp party as they rode down on Burleigh Spring.⁴⁴ The *Nugget* disputed the account, but proponents of Earp insist that the outlaw was killed at this time.

Evidence shows that Curly Bill had left the area in 1881. In February 1882 Behan “sent a deputy to serve an arrest warrant on Curly Bill in El Paso.”⁴⁵ He was not involved in the pursuit of the Earps as garbled reports suggested. In time the *Epitaph* itself reported the true story.

On Friday last, Dick Wright, better known in Tombstone as “Whistling Dick” and Tony Kraker were out on the mesa west of Drew’s ranch below Contention, in search of strayed mules, and just at evening they rode down to the spring when they were suddenly confronted by four men with leveled guns pointed directly at them. Tony sung out, “what are you doing there you lop-eared Missourian?” This original salutation disarmed the cowboys, who lowered their guns and invited Tony and Dick to get down and make themselves at home, which they did. Sitting around the campfire the four cowboys told them their version of the story which was as follows: They said they were camped at the spring when they saw the Earp party ride down, and not knowing how they stood with them they thought that they would

Give Them a Shot

Just for luck so they blazed away and shot the pommel of Wyatt Earp’s saddle and killed the horse that Texas Jack was riding. They said that not one of the Earp party charged upon them but Wyatt, the balance all running away. Wyatt dismounted and fired his gun at them but without effect. Texas Jack is said to have jumped up behind one of the other boys a la Mexicana, and off they went as rapidly as they could. These are about as near the two sides of the fight as can be got at this time.⁴⁶

Brokenridge confirms this version, identifying two of the men as Alex Arnold and Pink Truly.⁴⁷ Someone also forgot to inform the press that Brocius was dead. In 1883 an El Paso paper reported, “‘Curly Bill,’ so often reported killed, is in Old Mexico.”⁴⁸

Pursuit of the murderers proved futile. Henry Hooker proved uncooperative in locating Earp. The posse then rode to Camp Grant to obtain government scouts. “On arrival at Grant, Colonel Biddle who was in command, received our county officials with great cordiality, but informed them that the Indian scouts had been ordered discharged only a few days previous.”⁴⁹

Some writers cite Hooker’s support for the Earps as evidence of their good work in putting down the Cowboys. Yet Hooker’s contemporaries did not care for him. Hancock wrote, “Ask some of the old timer cow-men what they think of ‘Col.’ Hooker. I have seen Hooker’s cows and unbranded calves left in the roundup when it was trimmed up and every one ready to pull out. If Hooker had stood well with his neighbors they would have cut his cows and calves with their own and brought them back as near as possible to his ranch.” Nor was Hooker above buying stock whose title was shaky. “A story is told on him that he once made a deal with some of the boys for a bunch of cattle. Title was all right as long [as] they were from far enough away so as no one would claim them. . . . There were very few of the ranchers but what would traffic with the Rustlers if they seen a bargain. It made no difference whether the stuff was stolen or not.”⁵⁰

Whatever Hooker’s reasons for aiding these murderers, the end result was the same. None of the Earps were ever brought to trial. Fleeing through New Mexico under assumed names they finally reached the safety of Colorado. Sheriff Bob Paul attempted unsuccessfully to extradite Holliday. While languishing in jail awaiting a decision on extradition, Holliday indulged in numerous lies and half-truths to ingratiate himself with the people of Colorado. “[John Behan] has five rustlers under him as deputies. One of these men is John Ringo, who jumped on the stage of the variety theater in Tombstone one night about three weeks ago, and took all the jewels from the proprietor’s wife in full view of the audience.”⁵¹ No such incident ever occurred. The *Arizona Star* provided an accurate summary. “If one twentieth part of what is said of them [the Earps] is true, they are certainly no desirable [sic] acquisition to any community. They are a roving band, their path is strewn with blood. Strange as it may seem, when they halt in a settlement, stage robberies follow, and human life ceases to be sacred.”⁵²

In the final analysis, the Earp gang escaped justice. As for Spence and Bode, Marietta Spence’s testimony did not hold up in court. Both men were released. The real murderer of

Morgan Earp remains unknown although writers and modern mythmakers cling tenaciously to the version provided by Wyatt B. S. Earp.

“Many friends will mourn him”

BEHAN DID NOT FAIL TO SECURE APACHE because the military favored the Earps. In January 1882 messengers from Juh and Nachez were sent to chief Loco on the San Carlos reservation. “During the intervening weeks there were indications that Apaches were moving north to contact the Warm Springs Indians at San Carlos.”¹ The army was on the alert, and scouts were kept busy on government business and unavailable as scouts for Behan, thus facilitating the escape of the fugitives.

The Earps raced northeast to avoid “a possible confrontation at Deming with a sure-enough man-killin’ deputy, Dan Tucker” arriving in Silver City with aliases as they ignominiously fled Arizona. “They were all mounted and armed to the teeth. One of the men when asked his name, answered John Smith, and another Bill Snooks.”² The outlaws found refuge in Colorado. “While the Earps blackened the reputation of the marshalcy in southern Arizona, other deputy marshals earned the regard of the citizenry.”³

Not all of the gang was on the run, however. Further violence struck Cochise County on the evening of March 25. M. R. Peel, George W. Cheyney, William Austin, and F. F. Hunt were seated in the office of the Tombstone Mill and Mining Company across the San Pedro River from Charleston. At twenty minutes past eight someone fumbled at the door, then struck it a blow. The door burst open and two men armed with rifles barged in. The leader fired point-blank into Peel’s chest. The second man fired at Austin, who escaped death by dropping to the floor. The killers fled to their horses, which a third man was holding.⁴

The intruders made no attempt to rob their victims, and the crime has overtones of premeditated murder. “Another murder and this time of a most startling nature. Poor Peel was shot and instantly killed by two masked men at the T. M. & M. Co’s office, Charleston, last evening between eight and nine o’clock. No reason whatever assigned for the cause.”⁵ Peel’s father, Judge B. L. Peel, placed at least part of the blame on Holliday’s old friend, Six Shooter Smith. “‘California [Jim]’ was well known in this vicinity, and Judge Peel has long maintained the idea that he was engaged in the murder of his son at Charleston.”⁶ Peel, a Democrat, had taken an anti-Earp position during the troubles, and the claim may have merit. Smith had a bad reputation. “At Santa Fe, N. M., he was considered one of the most dangerous and desperate characters in the Territory, and was known as ‘Six-shooter Smith.’ In Tombstone he gave his name as Jas. W. Smith but was known as ‘Six-shooter’ as he did in Gainesville, Texas.”⁷ His real name was John Henry Hankins, and the *Denver Tribune* stated that he and J. J. Harlan, a conman and rapist best known as the Off Wheeler, were partners of Doc Holliday.⁸

Suspicion has fallen on Billy Grounds and Zwing Hunt, two minor cattle thieves and former members of Brocius’ gang. The men had been indicted the previous fall for stealing stock from

Robert Woolf and James Pursley. When word reached Tombstone that Grounds and Hunt were holed up at Chandler's milk ranch, Billy Breakenridge gathered a posse made up of E. H. Allen and two miners, Jack Young and John Gillespie. Allen and Gillespie were reliable men involved in the pursuit of the Earps. At Chandler's, Breakenridge detailed Young to watch one of the two cabins while the others surrounded the closest. Once in position, the posse hailed the cabin and all hell broke loose.

"Bull" Lewis, John Elliot and a third man named Caldwell emerged quickly from the house. Zwing Hunt followed, firing three bullets into Gillespie. Hunt dodged around to the south side of the cabin where he shot at Allen, the bullet creasing his neck. Allen returned Hunt's fire, knocking him to the ground with a bullet in the chest. Young, rushing to help his friends, caught a bullet in the thigh and went down.

While Hunt was busy annihilating the posse, Grounds leaped out of the cabin and opened fire on Breakenridge with his Winchester. Breakenridge fired one barrel of his shotgun into the crouching outlaw's head and chest, and the fight was over.

Gillespie was dead, and Grounds died the following morning. Hunt survived his wounds and later escaped only to be killed by Apaches on May 31. Smith had already fled to New Mexico. He died on June 23, 1882, having been mortally wounded by a posse the day before in LaSalle County, Texas.⁹

Of the remaining members of the Earp gang, Holliday appears to have died first. Tuberculosis claimed him five years after Tombstone. Holliday coughed out his life at Glenwood Springs, Colorado, on November 8, 1887.¹⁰

Dan Tipton continued on the path of the unrighteous, at least until June 1897 when he was arrested in El Paso, Texas, with a phony customs seal and forged Chinese certificates. He was convicted in October 1897 and sentenced to the Ohio Penitentiary in Columbus. Tipton survived less than a year, dying on February 25, 1898.¹¹

Warren Earp's violent career spanned nearly two decades. In 1883 he was involved in a gunfight in Colton, California, and the following year assaulted a waiter in San Bernardino. In 1885 he was involved in an argument in a bar and shot off the bartender's thumb.¹² By 1891 he had returned to California, and in 1893 stabbed a man named Charles Steele twice in the back. He was also charged with extortion.¹³ By 1898 he settled in Willcox where he worked as a bartender.¹⁴ He was finally killed by Johnny Boyett, a cowboy he had bullied, on July 6, 1900, at Willcox.¹⁵

Virgil Earp separated from his brother Wyatt and served as a sometime peace officer. He died of pneumonia at Goldfield, Nevada, on October 19, 1905. McMaster is rumored to have been killed around 1890 in Colorado or Texas, but this has not been confirmed. John Blount, using the alias Ritchie, was arrested in 1885 for an attempted burglary of the Evans Club Room in Arkansas along with Wyatt Earp and a man who gave his name as Walls. He is said to have eventually died of natural causes in 1906 in California.¹⁶ Vermillion also continued his life of crime. He is said to have drowned in Lake Michigan.

As for Wyatt B. S. Earp, the remainder of his life proved singularly unspectacular. True to form he abandoned his wife Mattie after fleeing Arizona and eventually took up with the young prostitute Sadie Marcus, who now went by the name Josie. Mattie committed suicide on July 3,

1888. In 1884 Wyatt was accused of claim jumping. The following year he and Blount were charged with attempted burglary in Arkansas. By 1900 he had reached Alaska where he was knocked out after starting a row with Tom Mulqueen. Later the same year he was wounded in the arm when he drew on a customer.¹⁷ His entire career was dotted by petty crime but he was successful in avoiding prison. In the 1920s the aging Earp convinced at least two writers, both concerned more with sales than truth, of the importance of his role in “cleaning up Arizona.” The former lawman, pimp, horse thief and murderer died on January 13, 1929, from a lingering and painful cancer of the prostate.

Unlike the Earps, John Ringo remained in the region to face his accusers. His next court appearance was scheduled for May 8, and it appears likely that he visited his sisters in San Jose during April. Several notices in local newspapers confirm his absence from Tombstone during this time. On April 15 a notice of a letter for “Ringe [sic] Jno.” was published.¹⁸ This was followed by another notice on April 30 for “Ringold [sic] Jno.”¹⁹ A third notice dated May 6, for Jno. Ringold may simply have repeated the earlier April 30 listing.²⁰ During his absence Apaches killed another of his old friends, Tom Redding, on April 21, 1882 along with four other teamsters.

Ringo could easily have stayed in California to avoid the possibility of prison just as the Earps did, but he was not that kind of man. Unlike Wyatt Earp, he had not run when on trial for murder, and he did not run from the larceny charges.

On May 8, 1882, the *Epitaph* noted, “Jack Ringo is in Town.” The same day, his attorney, Briggs Goodrich, petitioned the court for J. S. Robinson to be added as associate counsel for the defense.²¹ Ringo’s trial was set for May 12, when the cases were continued until May 13.²² Cause 81 was continued on May 15.²³ Finally on May 18, all charges were dismissed and his bail exonerated. Ringo left the courtroom a free man.²⁴

While the trial was taking place, Ringo was enumerated in Cochise County’s Great Register as entry 2649. The registration on May 16 listed him as a speculator. It incorrectly gave his residence as Tombstone and his age as thirty-nine.²⁵ He had barely turned thirty-two.

Ringo returned to New Mexico. One of those happy to see him there was Mary Hughes, a younger sister of Jim Hughes.

John Ringo . . . was an especially welcome guest at the Hughes home. He was the hero of 11-year-old Mary Hughes. . . . Whenever Mary, scanning the country from the watchtower, saw him coming, she put on her prettiest dress and combed her glossy, black hair. John Ringo, when he spoke to her, made her feel like a great lady. He had read many books, and he told her of what he read. So he taught her English from the family Bible, and Spanish from a book he had picked up in Tombstone.

He taught her how to write, and she took enormous pride in copying his beautiful Spencerian chirography.²⁶

Ringo had now reached the pinnacle of his fame. His reputation remained intact, and he was well thought of by most of his contemporaries. At the same time he was still suffering from whatever darkness plagued him, and his efforts to blot it out led him to ever-heavier drinking that deepened his depression and caused him to drink more. It was a vicious circle.

In late June or early July he returned to Tombstone, where he was reportedly on an “extended jamboree.” On July 2 he confided to an *Epitaph* reporter “he was as certain of being killed, as he was of being living then. He said he might run along for a couple of years more, and may not last two days.”²⁷

Ringo left Tombstone on July 8, arriving at “Dial’s in the South Pass of the Dragoons.” From Dial’s he rode on to Galeyville, where he continued drinking. Breakenridge ran into him along the road.

. . . I met John Ringo in the South Pass of the Dragoon Mountains. It was shortly after noon. Ringo was very drunk, reeling in the saddle, and said he was going to Galeyville. It was in the summer and a very hot day. He offered me a drink out of a bottle half-full of whiskey, and he had another full bottle. I tasted it and it was too hot to drink. It burned my lips. Knowing that he would have to ride nearly all night before he could reach Galeyville, I tried to get him to go back with me to the Goodrich Ranch and wait until after sundown, but he was stubborn and went on his way.²⁸

The following day Ringo was found dead in Morse’s Canyon. The *Epitaph* published a long obituary noting in part that:

He was recognized by friends and foes alike as a recklessly brave man, who would go any distance, or undergo any hardship to serve a friend or punish an enemy. While undoubtedly reckless, he was far from being a desperado and we know of no murder being laid to his charge. Friends and foes are unanimous in the opinion that he was a strictly honorable man in all his dealings, and that his word was as good as his bond. . . . He was found by a man named John Yost [sic: Yeast] who was acquainted with him for years both in this Territory and Texas.²⁹

Ringo had shot himself in the head. In New Mexico the papers also noted his death.

ANOTHER GREAT SOUL FLOWN.

It is with much regret that we chronicle the demise of one of the most illustrious men of the southwest. Had the much lamented deceased lived in antiquity his fame might have surpassed that of Hector or Ulysses; but alas, republics are ungrateful, and no public honor was ever shown to the king of the cowboys. Born of poor but honest parents, John Ringgold surmounted all the obstacles thrown in his path and made for himself a name that should live in the history of the nation. Gentleman like and pleasant in his manner, even easy going in many ways, he was a rigid observer of the old fashioned frontier code of honor that unfortunately is fast disappearing. During the past few years thirty-two men dared to doubt his honor. They now fill thirty-two graves. He distinguished himself when at Shakespeare by his fine and effective shooting, and is kindly remembered in that burg. Although he had many competitors in his line, he had no true rivals, and Curly Bill and Billy the Kid will not bear comparison with him. His body was found last week in the Chiricahua mountains with a bullet hole through the head. The supposition is that he was crossed in love and ended his sufferings in this tragic manner. Thus passed away in the flower of his youth a man who, had he lived, might have aspired to almost any eminent position. Alas! ’twas not to be:

*Car il etait du monde ou les plus belles choses
Ont le pire destin.
Et Ringgold a vecu ce que vivent les roses
L’espace d’un matin.*³⁰

The poem translates as:

For he was of the world in which the most beautiful things
Have the worst destiny,
And Ringgold lived as live the roses
The duration of a morning.³¹

Other accounts noted his passing, but these two provided by the contemporaries who knew him best clearly indicate the sense of loss felt by the community.

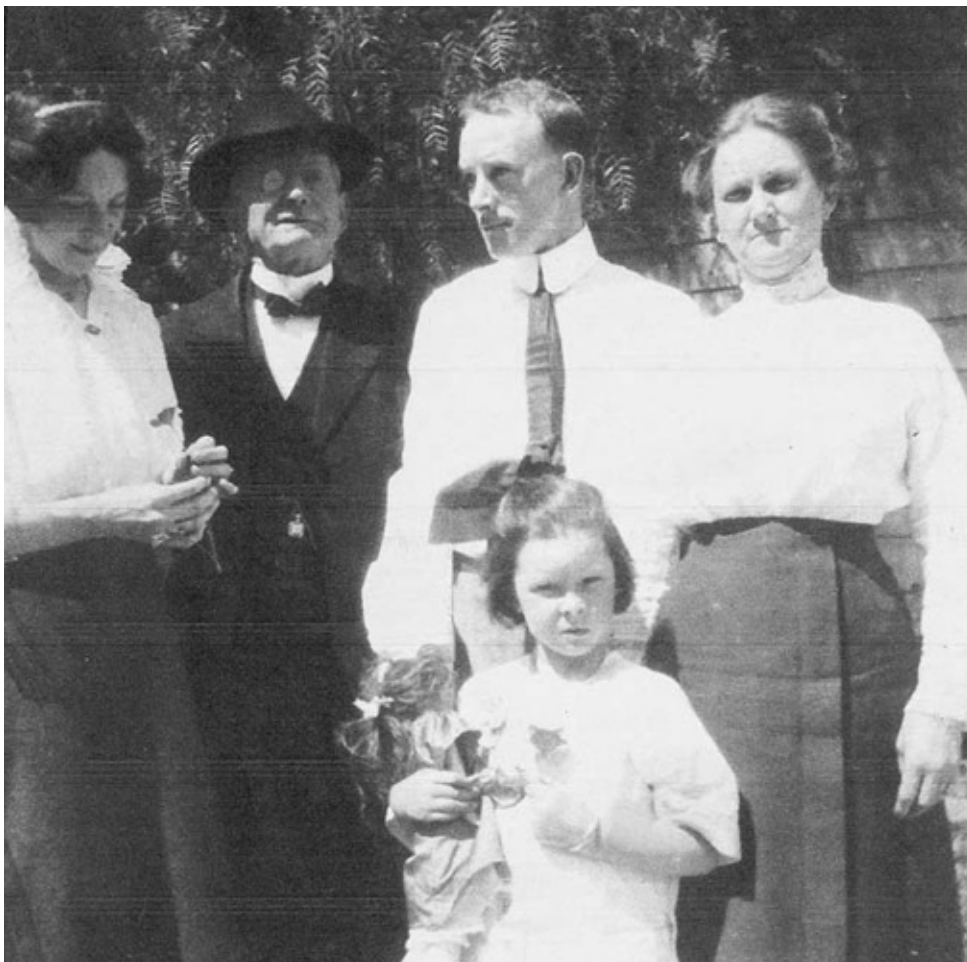
Ringo’s death remains controversial. Since his demise in 1882, many have denied that Ringo killed himself and advance numerous men as the assassin. One popular theory is that Wyatt Earp returned to Arizona to kill Ringo. This has led to elaborate scenarios where Wyatt and a party of men waited until Ringo was roaring drunk and killed him. Among the various others blamed for murdering Ringo have been Doc Holliday and Buckskin Frank Leslie.

One Ringo biographer opts for suicide.³² He quotes a letter from Charles Ringo to William

K. Hall that states in part, “I have another story from a Mrs. Travis whose husband was of that family, that the sisters would not let him in the house. You will notice that the body was left in Arizona and not brought back.”³³ Based upon that and other correspondence from Charles Ringo, he concludes that Ringo had attempted to return to his family but met a hostile reception and despondently went back to Arizona, where he killed himself.³⁴ Another states “John Ringo had lost all interest in life, and in a state of alcoholic despair the young man shot himself.”³⁵

Seeking to prove that his family had disowned Ringo, one writer references letters Ringo received from his family and quotes Frank Cushing, John’s nephew, as stating that he never wrote back. This is intriguing, for if John did not write to his family, how did they know where to write to him once he left Missouri in the early 1870s? Moreover, if his family disowned him, why was he found with a letter from Fanny Jackson in his pocket? The *Citizen* stated, “In one of the pockets [of his coat] were three photographs and a card bearing the name Mrs. Jackson.”³⁶

The statement made for the coroner has also provoked controversy, both for what it did and did not say. The points of contention may be summarized as its failure to mention that a bullet had been fired from the pistol, its failure to mention powder burns, and its description of “a bullet hole in the right temple, the bullet coming out of the top of the head on the left side. There is apparently a part of the scalp gone including a small portion of the forehead and part of the hair. This looks as if cut out by a knife.”



1916 Ringo family picture (left to right) Louise Elizabeth Keil Jackson, Frank Mason Jackson, Frank Ringo Jackson, Fanny Fern

The weaknesses in the statement can be explained in part by the backgrounds of the fifteen witnesses. None of them were physicians, and the coroner was not present. They were describing what they saw as accurately as they could for the coroner. Concerning their failure to mention the discharged weapon, Ringo's obituary in the Tucson papers provided some additional information: "The pistol with *one chamber emptied* [emphasis added] was found in his clenched fist."³⁷ Such papers as the *Phoenix Gazette* and the *Citizen* picked up that news release. The *Phoenix Gazette* noted:

John Ringgold, one of the best known men in southwestern Arizona, was found dead in Morse's canyon, the Chiricahua mountains last Friday. He evidently committed suicide. He was known in this section as "King of the Cowboys" and was fearless in the extreme. He had many staunch friends and bitter enemies. The pistol, with one chamber emptied, was found in his clenched fist. He shot himself in the head, the bullet entering on the right side, between the eye and ear, and coming out on top of the head. Some members of his family reside at San Jose California.—*Citizen*.³⁸

Witness Robert M. Boller also confirmed that Ringo's pistol had been fired. "His pistol with one empty shell was caught in his watch chain."³⁹ The failure to mention the discharged shell was simply that, a failure, which was corrected when the weapon was examined later.

The report's failure to mention powder burns could have resulted from either of two possible causes. First, as with the cartridge, the untrained observers might simply have overlooked any powder burns. Second, by the time Yoast found Ringo, the body was decaying in Arizona's summer heat. Boller recalled the "body was in such condition that we buried it right there."⁴⁰ In another letter he provided more graphic details. Responding to Frank King's inquiry "if I noticed powder marks on Ringo's head" Boller wrote "The body had turned black and was smelling." Boller further added:

He had held the sixshooter against his head about an inch above his right ear and pulled the trigger. That is the way we all agreed that it happened except John Yoas, and he too was convinced when I showed him where the bullet had entered the tree on his left side. Blood and brains oozed from the wound and matted his hair. There was an empty shell in the sixshooter and the hammer was on that.⁴¹

Despite the strange exit wound, the men who found Ringo never doubted that he had killed himself. "[A. E.] 'Bull' Lewis who was in the coroner's jury told me there was absolutely no question but what Ringo committed suicide."⁴² Boller recalled, "There is no question in the minds of any of the five [sic] who found him but what [he] committed suicide."⁴³

Ringo's horse wandered until July 25. "A son of Mr. B. F. Smith, says the Tombstone Independent, found John Ringo's horse, on Tuesday last, about two miles from where deceased was found. His saddle was still upon him with Ringo's coat upon the back of it. In one of the pockets were three photographs and a card bearing the name of 'Mrs. Jackson.' It seems strange that the horse should have wandered about all this time without having been discovered before. Mr. Smith brought the horse into town with him. It is a bay, weighing about 1,000 pounds."⁴⁴

Misfortune hounded many of those linked to John Ringo. William Claiborne came to irrationally believe that Frank Leslie had killed Ringo. On November 18, 1882, Claiborne rode into Tombstone, intent on killing Leslie. Leslie's aim was more accurate and Claiborne was killed.

On December 13, 1884, the *Arizona Silver Belt* reported, “From the Willcox Stockman we learn that Joe Hill, a well-known cattle man, met with a fatal accident at Bowie, on Wednesday [December 3] of last week. While driving cattle into a corral, riding at a full gallop, his horse stumbled and fell. Mr. Hill was thrown violently to the ground and received internal injuries from which he died within an hour.”⁴⁵

Pete Spence, according to modern writers, so feared the wrath of Wyatt Earp that he surrendered himself to the law and was sent to the Yuma penitentiary.⁴⁶ Contemporary documents do not support this story. Spence did enter Yuma, as convict 1885, but not until June 10, 1893, belying his terror of the Earps. He gave his age as forty and his occupation as teamster. The charge was aggravated assault.⁴⁷ The *Yuma Times* commented, “Pete Spence, who was sentenced to five years in the Yuma Penitentiary, is a well-known character in Arizona; a man that never knew what danger meant, and during the early days of Tombstone was disliked and feared by the famous Earp gang. Pete is a generous man and his great fault lies in the too ready use of his gun.”⁴⁸ Spence was unconditionally pardoned on November 29, 1894, when it was determined that he had been convicted on perjured testimony. He died of natural causes on January 13, 1914.

Fate was far less kind to Ike Clanton. On June 1, 1887, J. V. Brighton was attempting to arrest Clanton for cattle theft. Brighton claimed that Clanton drew his Winchester from its saddle scabbard and attempted to flee. Why Clanton would attempt to draw a rifle while mounted when his pistol was readily at hand is unknown. Brighton shot him in the back. Ike’s brother Phin was charged at the same time with the same charges. Phin was sent to Yuma but pardoned when authorities learned he had been convicted by perjured testimony.⁴⁹ Phin Clanton died of natural causes on January 5, 1906.⁵⁰

Why Ringo committed suicide is unknown and will likely remain so. It could be for reasons as complex as post traumatic stress syndrome or simple depression exacerbated by alcohol. It could have been that a spur of the moment depression induced the impulse. Whatever the cause, all that is known for certain is that John Ringo killed himself at around three o’clock in the afternoon on July 13, 1882. His journey into folklore had begun.

“bitter and conspiratorial silence”

OVER THE PAST FIFTY YEARS, interest in John Ringo has blossomed. As it did, some writers, armed with predetermined agendas, questioned John Ringo’s character based on his relations with his immediate family and speculation by distant family members. The resulting controversy is largely due to several men.

One of these was a distant relative, Charles Ringo. Charles informed one Ringo biographer that John’s sisters denied him entry to their home in 1881.¹ In the same letter Charles contradicted himself: “In 1881 he [John Ringo] came home and went back to sell his cattle and then come back.” Although neither version is necessarily more believable, the biographer accepted the former. A second writer accepts the first account but offers neither footnotes nor sources and his information cannot be independently confirmed.² In contrast, one detailed biography states, “In actuality, the Ringo sisters were not ‘shamed and disgraced by their gunman-outlaw brother’ during his life.”³ Confronted by two versions, neither more readily correct than the other, the sources and contemporary documentation must be examined to formulate the most plausible theory.

Concerning Charles Ringo, friend, family member, and historian David Leer Ringo wrote that he was neither a genealogist nor a historian. “He loved a good story, whether factual or not.”⁴ Building on letters provided by Charles, one biographer was led to believe that John’s sisters never forgave his escapades.⁵ Mary Enna Ringo, portrayed as an “angry and sanctimonious spinster,” appears as the driving force among his sisters.⁶ “The bitter and conspiratorial silence endured.”⁷ It did not, however, endure more than a few days after Ringo’s death. On July 25, 1882, the *Epitaph* reported that it “yesterday received a letter from Miss Emma [*sic* : Enna] Ringo, sister of the late John Ringo, in which she says that John was born in Indiana, in 1850, and was thirty-two years old at the time of his death. Col. Younger was an uncle by marriage, and consequently Ringo was no relative of the Younger boys.”⁸ Clearly the “sanctimonious” Mary Enna Ringo linked John to the Ringo family in San Jose. Obviously she had neither disowned him nor attempted to conceal their relationship.



1928 Ringo family picture (left to right) George Keil, Mary Enna Ringo, Fanny Fern Ringo Jackson, Frank Ringo Jackson, Louise Elizabeth Keil Jackson, and Wilhelmina Cochrane Keil. *Courtesy Frank Ringo Jackson Personal Collection.*

But if Charles Ringo erred, as he clearly did, where did he get his story? The answer to this question lies in the period after Mary Enna's letter to the *Epitaph*. In later years, the Ringo family did lapse into silence. The question is why?

According to Ringo's biographer, Charles Ringo informed him in 1971 that Enna had destroyed everything she could find linking John to Texas and Arizona. The same author further references Charles' alleged conversation with Frank Cushing, John Ringo's nephew, in which Cushing, at Enna's direction, threatened to take legal action against a Florida relative who wished to publish an article on John.⁹ The writer concluded that John's sisters appeared "humorless and lacking in introspective powers."¹⁰

In reality, John's family knew little of his activities in Texas and Arizona beyond the fact that he was in the cattle business. Little, that is, until 1934, when the Ringo research group was being founded. One of the group's earliest members was Minerva Letton, of Valrico, Florida. On September 15, 1934, Mrs. Letton wrote to David L. Ringo, "You ask me to write about 'John Ringo of Tombstone.' Do you know that Charles Ringo (of San Fran—and NJ) *found him*? I did not know a thing about 'the big brave bandit' until Charles wrote me all about him, and told me to read Walter Noble Burns' book."¹¹

As David Ringo's request, Mrs. Letton drafted a short monograph titled, "One Honorable Outlaw." The article in its entirety reads:

John Ringo of Tombstone Arizona was one of the greatest and most colorful outlaws of the Southwest. Numerous books written on that section call him "the honorable outlaw," "the gentleman outlaw," and the "intellectual outlaw." So really "Cousin John" is not a bad fellow to read about.

"Cousin John" . . . yes, his descent has been proven, and he was really and truly one of our Ringo family, one of whom we are not ashamed [sic]. Even tho fate tossed him into a regrettable role, he lived it as a gentleman, and died with the respect

of all who knew him.

When merely a boy, John Ringo's only brother was killed in a "cattle war" in a western state. John avenged his death in the way such things were done, and left home to escape the law. For a while he was a vagabond, but soon formed a close friendship with the bold and jovial "Curly Bill," which lasted as long as he lived. "Curly Bill" was something of a mediaeval robber baron, and could call a hundred men to arms in a day. He "rustled cattle" from Mexican ranches across the border where a thousand head would not be missed when taken at a time. John Ringo became "Curly Bill's" right-hand man, and some say "the brains." Of course John Ringo took part in the raids, drank and gambled with his associates, but he remained a man apart, preserving something of the dignity of his inheritance.

He was a tall, dark, straight, commanding figure and always had two ivory handled six-shooters at his side. He was absolutely fearless, afraid of no man, but had the highest reverence for womankind. If any man made an unkind remark about any woman, good or bad, in his presence, he had to "eat his words, or fight, that was John Ringo's way."

He was the trusted friend of high officials. When he gave his word, they knew he would live up to it, or die trying. He thought nothing of riding horseback all night long over dangerous roads to aid someone who had befriended him.

John Ringo was miserably ashamed [sic] of the life he led, but found no way out of it. He felt that he had disgraced his family, and did not want them to know. In that he misjudged us. Knowing the facts, we his kinsmen feel no shame in calling him 'our cousin.'

The manner in which he met death remains a mystery. His grave is high on the bank of Turkey Creek Canon. Up this steep embankment his friends carried enough smooth stones and boulders from the creek bed to form a giant mound twelve feet long, four feet wide and four feet high. This is eloquent proof of the love and respect they had for him. I know of no other grave in that section marked in like manner, it was their silent, impressive way of giving honor where honor was due.

Shortly afterwards, one of John Ringo's associates lost his life while trying to avenge Ringo's death.

Even now, John Ringo's ghost is frequently seen in that valley . . . so the natives say.

John Ringo was born May 3, 1850, died July 14, 1883 [sic] and in between . . . he lived . . . ¹²

With the notation that she had drawn upon Burns, Mrs. Letton sent a copy of the monograph to John's surviving sisters, Mattie and Enna, for comments. A response was quickly forthcoming. On October 5, 1934, they wrote:

We protest very strongly against what you have written about our brother. In the first place we don't consider that he was an outlaw, he was a cowboy and had stock ranches in Texas for several years. He did not leave San Jose on account of any crime he had committed, he went to Southern California with a harvesting outfit and from there wandered into Arizona and Texas. The story of his only brother killed is entirely false. Albert lived at home and helped his mother until he was taken with tuberculosis and after a lingering illness died at the age of nineteen years.

When we know and can prove that the statement about his having to leave the country was false how do we know but that the other statements are false also? No doubt he lived a cowboy life for several years—gambled and carried firearms as all men did in those frontier towns—but we don't think he was half as bad as he was painted, but if he was why bring it up when he had been dead for 52 years and cannot refute any of your statements. He visited us in San Jose in 1880 and was a fine upright gentleman.

I thought this society of the Ringo Clan was formed to promote a friendly feeling among the members. How can that be done if in the first issue of your paper you publish something detrimental about one of the family! [I]t isn't pleasant for us to contemplate and many people would know nothing about him if you hadn't taken the trouble to look it up.

I think it would be better to give an account of some prominent man who has led a good life and left a good example to follow.

We sincerely hope you will see this matter in the same light that we do and write something else that will not cause the unhappiness that this will.

We cannot understand how any one in a friendly society would go back 52 years to hunt up something to write against a person—you had better spend your time finding out good things to say about them. ¹³

Mattie and Enna sent David Ringo a copy of their letter. Mrs. Letton agreed to withhold the monograph, and David did not publish it. In a letter to David, Mrs. Letton lamented, "I regret it as much as you—but we did *not* 'hunt up' the data and publish the book. It has been *public* property in all libraries of any size for 7 years. If it wronged them, they should have settled it with the publishers years ago and had the book withdrawn . . . I am so thankful I sent them a copy 'before it was published'—if I hadn't, I wonder what they would have done to us. . . . Honestly, I am almost afraid to write to Mrs. Cushing and Miss Ringo fearing my apology will

be worse than the offense.”¹⁴



1938 Ringo family picture (left to right) Zana Cushing, Mary Elizabeth Wilson, Mattie Bell Ringo Cushing, and Mary Enna Ringo. *Courtesy Frank Ringo Jackson Personal Collection.*

Clearly, although Mrs. Letton feared a legal action, none was threatened. The clash affected John's sisters greatly. Mattie and Enna now began their own search for the truth. On November 5 they wrote a second letter to David Ringo and Mrs. Letton.

We must apologize for holding up the printing of your paper but we did not receive the letter. Miss Ringo had moved and the letter was missent so we did not receive it until the day before we wrote to you.

We want to thank you both for withholding the article about our brother. We still feel it would just be spreading the stories about him. After receiving Mrs. Letton's letter we read the book "Tombstone" and found even more untruthful things about him, he was not related to the Younger boys at all, an aunt of ours married Mr. Coleman Younger but that did not make him a relative. The book stated that he was John's grandfather.

We went to Tombstone to investigate for ourselves, we talked with several men who had known John although they were younger than he. They all spoke very well of him, and he was not as bad as was painted and that when he was sober was a perfect gentleman but when he was drinking he was ugly. No doubt he felt remorseful for neglecting his family.

The men to whom we talked said Mr. Walter Burns was around there for several days asking questions about early days then went away and wrote the book. If the rest of the book is as untruthful as the chapters about John it is a mere fiction founded on a few facts.

We took quite a long trip this summer returning a few days ago when we found the letters from both of you. We want to thank you both for your kindly letters and thank Mr. D. L. Ringo for the efforts he made to get his letter to us quickly.

They closed the letter cordially, "Wishing the Ringo Society every success."¹⁵

Yet the rumor of a threatening letter spread through the family. May Ringo King wrote to Joanna Green, "One reason you never see any stories about his parentage was because he never talked about his family who were ashamed of him. During the late '20s and '30s some of

the family researchers wrote his sisters in San Jose, Ca. and they wouldn't admit that he was their brother.”¹⁶ Mrs. King later clarified her intent: “This letter was mostly about [Joanna Green's] ancestor Malinda Humbert who married John Ringo a brother to Martin Ringo, Johnny's father. . . . In the above quote I was referring mainly to Mrs. Letton.”¹⁷

Nor was May King the only researcher Minerva Letton contacted. Dr. William K. Hall, Ringo researcher and coauthor of the *Simms Family of Safford County, Virginia*, recalled, “In one of her letters [Mrs. Letton] warned me to be extremely careful what I said about Johnny Ringo if I wrote to his sisters as they were extremely sensitive on the subject. She had apparently made some careless remark and the sisters took offense and stopped writing Mrs. Letton although I think they later patched things up.”¹⁸

Burns' book was not the end of it. Stuart N. Lake's fictionalized glorification, *Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal*, published in 1931, inspired movies about Earp, and the handwriting was on the wall. John's sisters realized not only that they could not compete with Burns and Lake, but that any rebuttal they made would meet with skepticism on the one hand and draw a horde of researchers and news people on the other. Their only viable option was to remain silent. Even when Wyatt Earp attained legendary status via television in the 1950s, the Ringo family remained mute. They might well have never spoken had it not been for a dogged researcher named Allen Erwin.

Erwin first contacted Frank Cushing around 1958. How Erwin located Cushing is unknown, but the two men corresponded over the next several years. Erwin also visited Cushing several times “in connection with his research on Johnny Ringo.”¹⁹ Cushing's sister, Zana Cushing Batchelder, and his cousin, Frank Jackson, also maintained contact with Erwin and provided information. Erwin confirmed this in 1959. Writing to one historian, Erwin noted, “For a number of years I have had material on Ringo and have been in touch with his nephews, niece, and grand niece, besides other members of the Ringo family who are distant relatives.”²⁰

Erwin was a thorough researcher, and he was determined to be the first to write a full-length book on Ringo. In 1973 Erwin wrote, “Once my book is out, I am in hopes others then will follow the Ringo trail, as there should be plenty of data that they can pursue. It has cost me a small fortune and many years of time.”²¹ Erwin contacted dozens of people in his hunt for Ringo. Cushing thought highly of him, writing, “he has always appeared to be a fine gentleman.”²² As time progressed, Erwin became more determined to defend his claim on John Ringo, and from others whom he worked with, another, darker portrait emerges.

David Leer Ringo wrote Charles in 1970 that Erwin had refused to return papers to him dealing with Martin Ringo's Mexican War experiences.²³ Other complaints are recorded. “I will attempt to find out about your copy of the Virginia City Enterprise,” Cushing wrote Charles. “I hate to thing [*sic* : think] that he [Erwin] would stoop so low as to steal.”²⁴ Another wrote, “You may not know this either, but a man in California can sure lead you astray so be Careful—he wanted to write a book on John Ringo—he's very dishonest. His name, I believe, is Erwin.”²⁵

Erwin began to play cat and mouse with those who sought information on Ringo from him, fearful perhaps that they would get a Ringo book into print before him. He voiced that concern in a letter. “Unfortunately a couple of others have also gotten the Ringo writing fever, which

some of the Ring[o]'s have leaked information to. This always is a factor which is part of researching, which is a hindrance."²⁶ Erwin had hit upon a scheme to keep other researchers away from what he considered his personal preserve. In another letter he complains: "Two of the Ringo family are still living, a niece and a nephew of John Ringo. But they have threatened to bring a suit against me, if I mention Ringo's parents, sisters and brother."²⁷ This bold-faced lie, obviously at variance with Cushing's impression of Erwin as a "fine gentleman" was repeated widely in Erwin's correspondence with others. Researchers knowing the Letton story in garbled form were ready to accept it as truth. Ironically, Erwin died before he could write his book.

In 1970 Charles Ringo contacted Frank Cushing. His initial letter illustrates what he really knew of John Ringo.

I have been corresponding with Dr. Hall, my cousin, about his book and what it says about John Ringo. I am very much interested in early Western history. My family knew your family in San Jose and I have heard a great deal about "Cousin Mattie" and "Cousin Enna." *I did not know anything about "Cousin John [emphasis added]."* I am enclosing a copy of a letter from him enclosing your letter of Nov. 11, 1969.

Today I received my copy of the magazine "American West" for January 1970. I am enclosing a copy of an article about "Ringo." I wrote to the author and sent him data from Dr. Hall's book.

I checked with the Calif. Hist. Soc. And they do not have a copy of the diary kept by your grandmother nor of your miniature. Is there any possibility of getting a copy of same.²⁸

Cushing's thoughts on the article would have been evident. In one part the author noted that Ringo was a partner in Curly Bill Brocius' gang, "as miserable a gaggle of backshooters as was ever known to the western frontier."²⁹ Such sentiments could hardly have inspired Cushing's confidence in the author's impartiality. He would write of the piece, "The last article I have seen about him was written by a history professor in San Jose College in 1970 [who] was not sure whether his name was Ring, Ringold or Ringo. He has spent several summers in Arizona checking on the history of that territory but could not find but a few facts with which to substantiate some of the stories written about him."³⁰ Knowing of Charles' desire to have a John Ringo book in print and that Charles accepted Burns as factual, Cushing can only have viewed his interest with caution.

For Ringo's sisters, life remained as it had been prior to the publication of Burns' book. The family remained close to the Younger family and attended celebrations at Coleman Younger's home.³¹ Fanny did not live to see the stories of her beloved brother unfold. She died on May 13, 1932. Her husband, Frank Moses Jackson, had died on September 6, 1917. Mary Enna died on June 27, 1941. She had served as a teacher in the San Jose, California, schools for fifty years. Mattie Bell Ringo died on May 20, 1942. Her husband, William LeBaron Cushing, had died on August 5, 1935. During their lifetimes the family gave no information on John Ringo's origins to those outside the family.

John Ringo remains today as Burns described him, a tragic figure. From his youth, death stalked his family. His efforts to help them drew him into the violence of the Hoo Doo War and, later, into the notoriety of Tombstone. He has been branded a cattle thief—a charge for which not a single indictment has been located. Since his suicide in 1882 his family has been victimized, first by Allen Erwin and later by other writers who have further tarnished their names. Others such as George Upshur, inspired by Lake's work, recalled him as "the best and

most powerful of all the cowboy gang leaders.”³² In the end we are left with the recollections of those contemporaries who knew him best. “Friends and foes are unanimous in the opinion that he was a strictly honorable man in his dealings, and that his word was as good as his bond.”

It is a fitting epitaph for a man.

Appendix 1

The *Liberty Tribune* of September 16, 1864, published the following letter from William Davenport concerning Martin Ringo's death on page 1 of the paper.

From the Plains.

PLATTE Harbor, Idaho Ter.
August 1st, 1864.

Mr. R. H. MILLER—Dear Friend:

I write to give you the melancholy information of the death of Martin Ringo. Owing to some difficulties we had with the Indians below Fort Laramie at Scott's Bluff the emigration formed themselves into large companies. Our company, consisting of the Martin brothers and Jas. Reed of Clay county, Forbes, Irvin, Lucas & Co., from Platte and Buchanan counties,—Beaurais & Co., from St. Joseph, with Mr. Ringo and family, and others, making in all about 70 wagons, have been traveling together for mutual protection. We passed through the Black Hills where the Indians have committed most of their depredations this season without being molested, and camped the night of the 29th of July, about three miles this side of Deer Creek, and about twenty-four miles from this point. Shortly after dark a gentleman by the name of Davis, from Kansas, went out about fifty yards from the camp to look after his horses that were picketed out, and an Indian shot and wounded him in the right arm and side, making a painful tho' not dangerous wound. The Indian succeeded in stealing three horses—one from Mr. Davis, one from Mr. Irvin, and one from David Morris. There was only one Indian seen, and I think his only object was to steal horses. The shooting of Mr. Davis created considerable excitement in camp, as we expected to be attacked by Indians in force. The whole company stood guard during the night so as to be prepared in case we were attacked. Just after daylight on the morning of the 30th ult., Mr. Ringo stepped outside of the wagons, as I suppose, for the purpose of looking around to see if Indians were in sight and his shot gun went off accidentally in his own hands, the load entering at his right eye and coming out at the top of his head. At the report of his gun I saw his hat blown up twenty feet in the air, and his brains were scattered in all directions. I never saw a more heart rending sight; and to see the distress and agony of his wife and children was painful in the extreme. Mr. Ringo's death has cast a gloom over our whole company, and his wife and children have our sympathies. The ladies in our company are very kind and attentive to Mrs. Ringo, and every gentleman in the company is disposed to do any thing in his power to make her comfortable, or promote her interests. Mr. Ringo was a very mild, pleasant and unassuming gentleman, and was duly appreciated by our company—all of whom esteemed him highly. He was buried near the place he was shot in as decent a manner as was possible with the facilities on the plains.

Mrs. Ringo thinks of going to Salt Lake and of disposing of her outfit at that point and taking the stage from there to California. There is a portion of our company that are going to California via Salt Lake; the larger portion are going to Idaho via the South Pass, and a portion of them are going by Bridger's Cut-Off, sixteen miles from here.

We do not anticipate any farther (*sic*) Indian troubles on our journey, as there is no report of their committing any depredations beyond this point. We are going to travel in sufficiently large companies to protect ourselves; and by keeping strict guard we do not expect to be molested—their only object being to steal horses.

Our company are all enjoying excellent health.

Your Friend,
WM. DAVENPORT.

Appendix 2

The Tombstone *Daily Nugget* of April 3, 1882, published a full account of Behan's pursuit of the Earp gang.

THE POSSE'S PURSUIT.

Return of Sheriff Behan and Deputies—A Fruitless Search for the Absconding Earps.

The sheriff's posse returned from the pursuit of the Earp party yesterday evening at 5 o'clock. The bronzed and weather-beaten appearance of the posse—more especially of Sheriff Behan and Under-Sheriff Woods—was ample proof of the arduous and exhausting nature of the trip, which had just been brought to an unsuccessful termination. The posse left Tombstone Monday morning (March 27) at 5 o'clock, numbering 15 men all told, including the Sheriff and Under-Sheriff. The trail of the fugitives was struck by the pursuers four miles from town, and led in the direction of Summit Station, in Dragoon Pass, to which point the posse proceeded with all possible speed, fearing that the Earp party had boarded a passing train at the station and left the country. Arriving there, however, it was ascertained that the fugitives had crossed the railroad and proceeded north toward Hooker's ranch. The pursuers immediately pushed forward, and camped near Winchester District Monday night. They started early Tuesday morning, and

ARRIVED AT HOOKER'S

at 7 a.m., where it was learned that the party they were in quest of had been the day previous and had left on Monday evening. The proprietor of the ranch utterly refused to impart any information concerning the direction taken by his whilom guests of the day before; said he didn't know and wouldn't tell if he did know, and concluded by saying, 'D—n the officers and d—n the law.' He furnished the posse with food for themselves and animals—for which he received liberal compensation—but positively refused to supply them with fresh horses. It was also learned by Sheriff Behan that Tipton had here joined the Earps, and that Hooker had outfitted the entire party with provisions, fresh horses, etc. After breakfast at the ranch, and being unable to discover the trail of the fugitives, Behan and Woods started for Fort Grant, 25 miles distant, with the intention of securing the services of Government scouts as trailers, the remainder of the posse mean while continuing their efforts to discover the trail in the mountains west and north of Hooker's. On arrival at Grant, Colonel Biddle who was in command, received our county officials with great cordiality, but informed them that the Indian scouts had been ordered discharged only a few days previous. Sheriff Behan offered \$500 reward, but the much coveted assistance of the

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could not be obtained. The discomfited officials then retraced their way to Hooker's, when, no trace of the lost trail having been discovered in their absence, the entire posse took horse and departed for Eureka Springs at the head of Aravaipa Canyon. They remained there until Wednesday morning, and becoming satisfied that the fugitives had not effected their escape in that direction again returned to Hooker's. The Graham county cattleman was not quite so reticent as on the former visit of the posse. He now informed the Sheriff that the Earp party was much the better armed, and in case of an encounter would undoubtedly 'get away' with the Sheriff and his posse. The mountains to the south of the ranch were thoroughly scouted for traces of the fugitives, and none being found, they

PROCEEDED TO WINCHESTER DISTRICT,

where camp was made for the night and three fresh horses obtained, and from there the return trip was made yesterday.

Under-sheriff Woods speaks in the highest terms of the treatment of the posse by the citizens of both Cochise and Graham counties, with the single exception already noted, Mr. H. C. Hooker, of the Sierra Bonita ranch, a man whom, from the large property interests he had in the country, would naturally be supposed to be in favor of upholding the constituted authorities and the preservation of law and order.

Endnotes

CHAPTER 1

1. Steve Gatto, *Johnny Ringo* (Lansing, Michigan: Protar House, 2002), 171. Hereafter cited as Gatto, *Ringo*.
2. Walter Noble Burns, *Tombstone: An Iliad of the Southwest* (1927; repr. New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), 94. Hereafter cited as Burns.
3. Jeffrey J. Morey, "The Curious Vendetta of Glenn G. Boyer," *National Association of Outlaw and Lawman History Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1994): 22. Hereafter cited as *NOLA Quarterly*.
4. Burns, 95.
5. Grace McCool to the author, October 4, 1982.
6. The word *Walloon* has its origins in the Flemish words *wal* (foreign) and *oon* (one), literally "foreign one." The term was used to differentiate the French speaking residents of Flanders from the Flemish speakers.
7. J. B. Collins to B. M. Jacobs, July 17, 1880, University of Arizona Special Collections, Tucson, Arizona.
8. Several individuals incorrectly believed Burtis and Hannah Rector were John's ancestors. Another theory was advanced that John Ringo of Arizona was not John Ringgold of Texas. The name Ringo has been spelled in various ways over the centuries, but Ringgold is not found in the old archives. It was used incorrectly by the contemporary press. C. F. Eckhardt, "The Real Johnny Ringo Legend Not Square with the Facts," *Tombstone Epitaph* (National Edition), August 1994; Allen Erwin to Thos. C. Ferguson dated November 27, 1970. Courtesy Pete Rose who obtained the letter from Mr. Ferguson. Copy in author's files; Ben F. Traywick, *John Peters Ringo—Mythical Gunfighter* (Tombstone, Arizona: Red Marie's Bookstore, 1987), 2; hereafter cited as Traywick, *Ringo*; Larry King, *Rector Records* (Hendersonville, Tennessee: Privately Published, 1986), 8; David Leer Ringo, *The Ringos in Europe*, Ringo Family History Series 1, Part 1 (Alhambra, California: The Freeborn Family Organization, 1984), 39.
9. David Leer Ringo, ed., *The Line of Descent From Major Ringo*, Ringo Family History Series 5 (Alhambra, California: The Freeborn Family Organization, Inc.), 1981, 5. Hereafter cited as *Major Ringo*.
10. Wayne County, Indiana, Deed Records, Volume A, 426.
11. Wayne County, Indiana, 1820 Census.
12. *1884 History of Wayne County*, Indiana, Volume 2 (Chicago: Inter-State Publishing Co., 1884), 320. Andrew White Young's *History of Wayne County, Indiana*, dates this church's formation in 1823. See Young, 171. Centerville was originally known as "Centreville." The spelling "Centerville" has been used throughout the text.
13. *Ibid.*, Volume 1, 448.
14. Wayne County, Indiana, Deed Records, Volume F, 168.
15. *Ibid.*, Volume F, 179.
16. The Ringo family also referred to Melissa as "Manica." In a letter to the author, Phillip Ault identified her clearly as Manice Jane Ringo. Her birthdate is alternatively given as January 27, 1826. She married Elias F. Halliday. Pugh Ringo died April 12, 1828.
17. Wayne County, Indiana, 1830 Census.
18. Wayne County, Indiana, 1840 Census.
19. Daniel Ringo was born October 27, 1803, to Major Ringo and Elizabeth Hazelrigg. By the 1820s he had moved to Arkansas where he married Mary Ann Cocke. Daniel served as chief justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court from 1836 to 1844. Later he served as a United States district judge. He died at Little Rock, Arkansas, on September 3, 1873.
20. Pulaski County, Arkansas, Will Records, Book C, 131–135.
21. John R. Funk was born August 3, 1808, in Virginia.
22. *Major Ringo*, 11.
23. *Indiana True Republican*, April 12, 1860.
24. Samuel H. Ringo, a younger brother of Major Ringo, was born March 16, 1761, in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. The family eventually moved to Howard County, Missouri. The date of Samuel's death has not been determined with certainty but it probably was around 1827.
25. Traywick, *Ringo*, 3.
26. Jack Burrows, *John Ringo—The Gunfighter Who Never Was* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987), 119. Hereafter cited as Burrows, *Gunfighter*.
27. *Tombstone Epitaph*, July 22, 1882.
28. *Liberty* (Missouri) *Tribune*, August 17, 1860.
29. Wilma Chappell and William K. Hall, *The Simms Family of Stafford County, Virginia* (St. Louis: n. p., 1969), 38. Hereafter cited as *Simms Family*.

30. David Leer Ringo, ed., *The Line of Descent from Samuel H. Ringo*, Ringo Family History Series (Hereafter RFHS) 7 (Alhambra, California: The Freeborn Family Organization, 1981), 9.
31. *Liberty Tribune*, July 27, 1860; *Simms Family*, 38. The author references *Missouri Democracy—A History*; Volume 3, which notes: “John R. Peters, brother of Ira Peters, was an early settler of Liberty and served as sheriff of Clay country [sic]. His brother Ashby was the father of Mason S. Peters, who was a member of congress.”
32. *Simms Family*, 18.
33. *Ibid.*, 39.
34. *Ibid.*, 65.
35. Henry Washington Younger and Bursheba Leighton Fristoe had fourteen children, of whom Cole, Jim, John, and Bob were noted outlaws following the Civil War. Henry, born February 22, 1810, was killed by Missouri militia on July 20, 1862. His wife, born June 6, 1816, in McMinnville, Tennessee, was the daughter of Richard Marshall Fristoe and Mary L. (Polly) Sullivan. She died on June 6, 1870.
36. Adeline Lee Younger was born 1836 to Charles Lee Younger and his common-law wife, Parmelia Dorcus Wilson, a daughter of Thomas and Malinda Wilson. Adeline married James Lewis Dalton, Jr., on March 12, 1851. The couple had thirteen children of whom Gratton, Robert, and Emmett are best known.
37. Benjamin A. Simms Pension File, National Archives, Washington, D. C. Simms was drafted around July 1814 and served through December as a private.
38. *Simms Family*, 42.
39. William A. Settle, *Jesse James Was His Name* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1967), 8.
40. *Liberty Tribune*, January 6, 1854.
41. Martin Ringo Military Record, National Archives, Washington, D. C.
42. Official Report of the Battle of Sacramento, Colonel Alexander W. Doniphan to Roger Jones, Adjutant-General of the Army, March 4, 1847, National Archives, Washington, D. C.
43. Mary Ringo, *The Journal of Mrs. Mary Ringo* (Santa Ana, California: privately published by Frank Myrle Cushing, 1956). Foreword. Hereafter cited as *Ringo Journal*.
44. Martin Ringo Military Record.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Clay County, Missouri, Marriage Records.
47. *Liberty Tribune*, September 8, 1848.
48. Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850–1880*, vol. 3 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Historical Society, 1965), 13.
49. Frederick J. Johnson, *America and American Methodism*, quoted in Thorn-brough, 38.

CHAPTER 2

1. *History of Wayne County, Indiana*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Inter-State Publishing Co., 1884), 419.
2. Henry Clay Fox, ed., *Memoirs of Wayne County and the City of Richmond, Indiana* (Madison: Wisconsin: Western Historical Association, 1912), 234.
3. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 106.
4. Traywick, *Ringo*, 2.
5. Allen Erwin to Thos. C. Ferguson, November 27, 1970, courtesy Pete Rose, copy in author’s files.
6. Gatto, *Ringo*, 7.
7. Richmond (Indiana) *Palladium-Item*, September 23, 1968.
8. *Ibid.*, November 11, 1978.
9. *Ibid.*, May 23, 1976.
10. *Ibid.*, November 11, 1978.
11. Luther Feeger, “Described Building of Forts to which Early Families Fled,” undated clipping from the *Palladium-Item* in a historical scrapbook at the Morrison-Reeves Library, Richmond, Indiana.
12. *Major Ringo*, 23; *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, July 25, 1882. His nephew Frank M. Cushing also confirmed John’s birth date when he published his grandmother, Mary Ringo’s, journal.
13. 1850 Census, Wayne County, Indiana.
14. 1850 Productions of Agriculture, Wayne County, Indiana.
15. 1850 Productions of Industry, Wayne County, Indiana.
16. A number of deeds were located for Peter Ringo but none for Martin. It appears that Martin did not use his bounty land grant while he was in Indiana.
17. Elias F. Halliday was born January 17, 1824, near Morristown, New Jersey. He and Mancia Jane had seven children of whom Margaret A. Halliday was born November 21, 1847. William Ringo Halliday was born March 31, 1850. Halliday later moved to Randolph County. Mancia died on November 18, 1885. Halliday died following a lingering illness on May 22, 1906. 1850 Census, Wayne County, Indiana; 1880 Census, Randolph County, Indiana; Family Data and obituary dated May 31, 1906,

from an unknown newspaper, courtesy Phillip H. Ault.

18. *Liberty Tribune*, September 16, 1864.
19. Ibid, August 17, 1860.
20. Ibid.
21. Traywick, *Ringo*, 3; Erwin to Ferguson, November 27, 1970.
22. David Leer Ringo, ed., *The Line of Descent from Samuel H. Ringo*, RFHS 7, (Alhambra, California: The Freeborn Family Association, 1980), 11. Hereafter cited as *Samuel Ringo*.
23. 1850 Census, Red River County, Texas.
24. Clarksville (Texas) *Northern Standard*, June 14, 1845.
25. Ibid., July 15, 1846.
26. Peter Ringo's second wife was named Elizabeth, but to date her maiden name has not been determined. A Mary Elizabeth Ringo later married Mathew James Nealy on October 28, 1855, but it is uncertain if this is the same woman.
27. Texas Court of Appeals Records, courtesy Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.
28. Era Fay Huff to the author, May 24, 1983.
29. 1850 Red River County, Texas, Census.
30. *Northern Standard*, November 2, 1850. William M. Ringo was the son of Henry Ringo and Katherine Pleakanstaluer and was born in Montgomery County, Kentucky, on May 25, 1815. He had served as a private in the 3rd Regiment Kentucky Foot Volunteers during the Mexican War. He was killed on October 2, 1850. Contrary to the newspaper report, Katherine Ringo did not die until April 13, 1866.
31. *Northern Standard*, October 21, 1854. Peter had ten children by his first wife: James, Abraham, Benjamin, Samuel, Robert, Elizabeth, Elias, Marinda, Amanda, and Mary.
32. Sammy Tise, *Texas County Sheriffs* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: Oakwood Printing, 1989), 434.
33. *Northern Standard*, October 21, 1854.
34. 1850 Census, Wayne County, Indiana.
35. *Major Ringo*, 5.
36. *Indiana True Republican*, September 15, 1859.
37. Helena (Arkansas) *Southern Shield*, July 26, 1851.
38. *Major Ringo*, 12. Hamilton's marriage to Mary Ann Martin on February 16, 1843, is noted in Book D, page 169, of the Wayne County marriage records.
39. Ibid., 11. William H. Ringo married Prudence L. Lewis on November 20, 1844. The 1850 census for Phillips County, Arkansas, lists him as a lawyer and that his brother Albert and sister Martha were living with him.
40. Ibid., 12.
41. Ibid. Contrary to modern writers, Martin Albert Ringo was named for both his father, Martin, and uncle Albert. There is no evidence that the senior Martin had a middle name. Traywick, *Ringo*, 2; Erwin to Ferguson, November 27, 1970.
42. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 118.
43. Ibid., 107.
44. Thornbrough, 6.
45. Ibid.
46. *Richmond Palladium*, April 25, 1850.
47. *Ringo Journal*, Foreword.

CHAPTER 3

1. *Liberty Tribune*, September 12, 1856.
2. *Major Ringo*, 25.
3. *Samuel Ringo*, 9; *Simms Family*, 53–54.
4. 1850 Clay County, Missouri, Census.
5. *Richmond Missourian*, April 13, 1934; *Liberty Tribune*, July 7, 1854.
6. *Samuel Ringo*, 13; *Simms Family*, 56.
7. 1850 Ray County, Missouri, Census.
8. 1860 Ray County, Missouri, Census.
9. *Simms Family*, 55. Elizabeth died on April 28, 1889, in Parkville, Missouri. The *Richmond Missourian* of April 19, 1934, reprinted her obituary from the *Liberty Advance*. Margaret died February 19, 1874, at Richmond, Missouri.
10. Clay County, Missouri, Deed Records, Volume G, 463.
11. *Liberty Tribune*, April 25, 1851.
12. Adam Clendenen was the son of Robert and Martha Anderson Clendenen and was born in Virginia around 1811. Clendenen married Mary Jane Gillerland on November 25, 1847. The 1850 census shows Clendenen as a farmer with a total worth of \$3,500. He died sometime between May 1859 and June 1860. 1850 Daviess County, Missouri, Census; 1860 Daviess County, Missouri, Census; Marriage Records, Daviess County, Missouri.

13. Daviess County, Missouri, Deed Records, Volume I, 133.
14. Bennett Pryor was a son of James and Ann Pryor and was born March 13, 1821, at Harper's Ferry, in what is now West Virginia. On April 22, 1847, he married Mary Ann Rhea. Pryor died on May 15, 1916, at Gower in Clinton County, Missouri. Mary Ann had preceded him, dying sometime around 1860.
15. Daviess County, Missouri, Deed Records, Volume H, 236.
16. David Stark to the author, July 1992; *Gallatin North Missourian*, July 22, 1992.
17. Erwin to Ferguson, November 27, 1970.
18. *Gallatin North Missourian*, April 8, 1926.
19. Daviess County Deed Records, Volume I, 133.
20. 1860 Daviess County, Missouri Census.
21. *Ringo Journal*, 38.
22. Daviess County Deed Records, Volume I, 551.
23. *Major Ringo*, 25.
24. David B. Stark to the author, "Skirmish at Cravensville," 1992.
25. *Ibid.*, 2–3; United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885), Series 1, Volume 13. Report of Col. James McFerran, First Missouri Cavalry (Militia) to Major James Rainsford, Assistant Adjutant-General.
26. *Ibid.*, 4.
27. *Gallatin Democrat*, June 18, 1936.
28. Daviess County Deed Records, Volume K, 218.
29. *Ringo Journal*, Foreword by Mattie Bell Ringo Cushing.
30. Gatto, *Ringo*, 8.

CHAPTER 4

1. *Ringo Journal*, Foreword by Mattie Bell Ringo Cushing. Mrs. Cushing wrote the foreword to her mother's journal in February 1942. She died on May 20, 1942. Mattie had married William LeBaron Cushing on April 23, 1890, in San Jose, California. The couple had two children: Zana, born April 23, 1891, and Frank Myrle Cushing, born January 10, 1893. Frank Cushing, a noted printer, privately printed the diary for limited distribution in 1956.
2. Kenneth L. Holmes, ed., *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails 1840–1890*, vol. 8, 1862–1865 (Spokane, Washington: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1989).
3. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 108–9.
4. Dr. William K. Hall to Charles R. Ringo, February 21, 1970. Copy in author's files.
5. *Ringo Journal*, Note.
6. *Ringo Journal*, Foreword by Mattie Bell Ringo Cushing.
7. *Ibid.*, May 18, 1864.
8. Mary spelled the names as she heard them. The families in question probably were Kirby and either Moore or Morris.
9. Efforts to determine the identities of the dead child and man have been unsuccessful.
10. Vienna Strother Simms Peters, the eldest child of John R. Peters, was born May 26, 1822, in Anderson County, Kentucky. She married William H. McCoun in November 1842. Following McCoun's death she taught school at Liberty, Missouri. The 1860 Census for Clay County lists her among her father's household. She died at Liberty on May 2, 1868. The couple had four children.
11. Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *The Civil War in the American West* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 99.
12. For a full account of the Kelly–Larimer massacre see Randy Brown, "Attack on the Kelly-Larimer Wagon Train," *Overland Journal* 3, no. 1 (1987): 16–40; Fanny Kelly, *Narrative of My Captivity Among the Sioux Indians* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1994), 16–20, 210–13.
13. *Liberty Tribune*, September 16, 1864. William H. Davenport identified the man as one "Davis of Kansas." See [Appendix 1](#).
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ringo Journal*, July 30, 1864.
16. Traywick, *Ringo*, 4.
17. Ed Bartholomew to the author, undated. The second grave was that of J. P. Parker, who died there in 1860. The graves were fenced in 1930.
18. Mary Enna Ringo to David Leer Ringo, January 4, 1935, courtesy David Leer Ringo. Copy in author's collection.
19. Randy Brown, "The Death of Martin Ringo," *Overland Journal* 7, no. 1 (1989): 22; *Ringo Journal*, 37. Mattie placed this event at Fort Laramie, but it probably occurred at Platte Bridge Station.
20. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 115.
21. *Ibid.*, 108. Using Martin's death as his basis, Professor Burrows diagnoses John as suffering some form of psychological trauma. Nothing in Mary's journal or family correspondence gives any indication that John suffered any trauma beyond that of

any bereaved child.

22. Erwin to Ferguson, November 27, 1970.

23. *Liberty Tribune*, September 16, 1864.

24. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 115.

CHAPTER 5

1. *Ringo Journal*, 37.

2. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 118.

3. *Ringo Journal*, 37.

4. Traywick, *Ringo*, 4.

5. Erwin to Ferguson, November 27, 1970.

6. *Ringo Journal*, 37–38.

7. Traywick, *Ringo*, 4.

8. *Ringo Journal*, 38.

9. Letter, James Chase to the author, undated.

10. *Simms Family*, 63.

11. Erwin to Ferguson, November 27, 1970.

12. Santa Clara County, California, probate records. Courtesy Marley Brant.

13. Ibid. Charles Bruce Younger was the eldest son of Thomas Coleman Younger and Elinor Murray born in 1832.

14. *Ringo Journal*, 38.

15. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 120.

16. Marley Brant, *The Outlaw Youngers—A Confederate Brotherhood* (Lanham, Maryland: Madison Books, 1992), 13–14; John J. Koblas, *Bushwhacker! Cole Younger & the Kansas-Missouri Border War* (St. Cloud, Minnesota: North Star Press of St. Cloud, 2004), 277.

17. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 120.

18. San Jose City Directory, 1870, 115.

19. 1870 Santa Clara County, California, Census.

20. Gatto, *Ringo*, 13.

21. San Jose City Directory, 1871–1872, 299.

22. Mattie B. Cushing and M. Enna Ringo to Mrs. J. H. Letton, October 5, 1934, courtesy David L. Ringo. Copy in author's files.

23. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 137.

24. Undated author's interview with David Leer Ringo, c. 1991.

25. *Major Ringo*, 23.

26. Ibid., 34. Professor Burrows says *Tombstone* is “a view without the refraction of mature historical research . . . with no responsibility or respect for history and incisive scruple.” Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 4.

27. Dr. William K. Hall to the author, September 14, 1992.

28. May King to the author, August 27, 1992.

29. David Leer Ringo, review of *John Ringo: The Gunfighter Who Never Was* by Jack Burrows, *Ringo Researcher* 3, no. 3 (1987): 126.

30. Gatto, *Ringo*, 13.

31. Jack DeMattos, “Johnny Ringo,” *Real West*, April 1985, 38. Hereafter cited as DeMattos, “Johnny Ringo.”

32. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 130–31, 136.

33. Ibid., 137.

34. Chuck Parsons, rev. of *John Ringo: The Gunfighter Who Never Was*, by Jack Burrows, *New Mexico Historical Review* 68 (1989): 468.

35. Traywick, *Ringo*, 4.

36. Gatto, *Ringo*, 13.

37. Mattie B. Cushing and M. Enna Ringo to Mrs. J. H. Letton, October 5, 1934. Courtesy David L. Ringo. Copy in author's files.

38. Era Fay Huff to the author, February 17, 1983.

39. Santa Clara County, California probate records, courtesy Marley Brant.

40. Author's telephone interview with Ed Bartholomew, spring 1993.

CHAPTER 6

1. Jack DeMattos, “Johnny Ringo! The Elusive Man Behind the Myth,” *NOLA Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1977): 8.

2. *Samuel H. Ringo*, 10.

3. George Kobayashi, Senior Librarian, San Jose Public Library to the author, October 26, 1982; 1874 San Jose City

Directory.

4. Allen A. Erwin to Charles (Chuck) N. Parsons, January 19, 1973, courtesy Chuck Parsons. Copy in author's files.
5. Era Fay Huff, "Ringo Genealogy," letter to the editor, *True West*, July 1988, 6.
6. Clarke Thomas and Jack Glendenning, *The Slicker War* (Aldrich, Missouri: Bona Publishing Company, 1984), 10.
7. *Ibid.*, 11.
8. *Ibid.*, 26.
9. Clarkesville *Northern Standard*, July 31, 1844.
10. Blanco County, Texas, deed abstract, courtesy Pete Rose.
11. David Johnson, *John Ringo* (Stillwater, Oklahoma: Barbed Wire Press, 1996), 48. Hereafter cited as Johnson, *Ringo*.
12. Allen Erwin to Charles N. Parsons, January 19, 1973.
13. Joseph G. McCoy, *Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and Southwest* (Kansas City, Missouri: Ramsey, Millett & Hudson, 1874), 8–9.
14. James H. Olney, *A Genealogy of the Descendants of Thomas Olney* (Providence, Rhode Island: E. L. Freeman & Son, 1889), 92.
15. 1840 Census, Yalobusha County, Mississippi.
16. The Lordsburg *Liberal* of March 4, 1920, stated incorrectly that Samuel was born in Bastrop County, Texas.
17. Sophie Olney Haynes, a daughter of John T. Olney, recorded in her genealogical material that "The middle names borne by descendants of Joseph and Mary Katherine Tanner Olney were the surnames of Mary's family and friends." Courtesy Iru Zeller. Hereafter cited as Haynes manuscript.
18. Burleson County, Texas Deed Records, Volume AP, 96.
19. 1850 Census, Burleson County, Texas.
20. John T. Olney, Soldier's Application for Pension, Number 40122. Courtesy Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas. Hereafter cited as TSA.
21. Samuel Olney War Record, TSA.
22. Joseph Graves Olney was named for his grandfather Joseph Olney and his grandmother Amelia Graves.
23. Burnet County, Texas, District Court Records, Causes 563, 598.
24. Burnet County, Texas, District Court Records, Causes 593, 594.
25. Adjutant General's Reports, Company O, from September 11 through September 21, 1872. Olney continued in the service until March 1873.
26. Olney Family Bible Records, courtesy Jane Harvey.
27. Tanner Family Bible, courtesy Ed Tatum; Mecklenburg County Marriage Records.
28. Brunswick County, Virginia Marriage Records; Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, microfilm 0030659.
29. Family information provided by Janene Tumlinson via Beulah Tanner Tumlinson, May 1, 2000, to Nina Olney; Sophie Olney Haynes manuscript, transcript in author's possession.
30. Samuel Young Tanner was born August 29, 1800. His grandfather Allen administered their estate. Samuel Tanner married Martha H. Phillips on April 30, 1818 and eventually settled in Fayette County, Missouri. Samuel died in 1840. Tanner Family Bible, courtesy Ed Tatum; Mecklenburg County Marriage Records; Mecklenburg County, Virginia Order Books 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20 and 22; Mecklenburg County, Virginia Bond Book; Mecklenburg County, Virginia Guardian Book.
31. 1840 Census, Yalobusha County, Mississippi.
32. The 1850 Census for Burleson County gives Angelina's age as 32 (born 1818). The 1860 census for Burleson County gives her age as 40 [born 1820]. Her headstone states that she was born September 14, 1818.
33. 1850 Census, Burleson County, Texas. The Harriet named on the 1850 census is Harriet Choate who married Nevill Gee in Burleson County in 1852. Salley is Sally Appleton Choate who married Robert Ury Porter. Matilda Choate had married William Gray in Yalobusha County prior to 1850. They had one child. William's fate is unknown.
34. 1860 Census, Burleson County, Texas.
35. 1860 Census, Burleson County, Texas. The family name, often misspelled, is Baird.
36. Madison County, Missouri, Marriage Records, Book B.
37. Moses Baird was paid \$4 for serving two days as a court bailiff on October 23, 1868. Burnet County, Texas, District Court Records.
38. Burnet County District Court Records, Causes 340 and 342.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*, Cause 346.
41. For a detailed account of the Baird brothers, reference Peter R. Rose and Elizabeth E. Sherry, eds, *The Hoo Doo War: Portraits of a Lawless Time* (Ozark, Missouri: Dogwood Printing, for the Mason County Historical Commission, 2003), specifically David Johnson, "The Baird Brothers of Burnet: Men of Large Connections," 71–89.
42. Baird also served from November 9 to November 17. In 1873 he served from January 7 through the 16th, and between February 1 and the 12th. In all he saw a total of forty-nine days of service during his enlistment. Texas Ranger Muster Rolls: J. R. Baird, Texas State Archives.

43. Burnet County Marriage Records, Volume C, 215. Nancy A. Robison Baird was born February 12, 1840. She died on January 15, 1888.
44. The family has consistently spelled the name Faris. Early court records and newspapers refer to the family frequently as Farris. The Faris spelling has been adopted for consistency. Burnet County, Texas, Deed Records, Volume G, 155.
45. Ina Davis to the author, April 10, 1986.
46. John Wesley Hardin, *The Life of John Wesley Hardin, as Written by Himself* (Repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 24. Hereafter cited as Hardin, *Life*.
47. *Burnet (Texas) Bulletin*, July 19, 1881. See also Chuck Parsons, "A Classic Texas Hardcase: Benjamin J. Hinds," *WOLA Journal* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 35–53; and Chuck Parsons, "A Classic Texas Hardcase—Benjamin J. Hinds," *Plum Creek Almanac* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 57–69.
48. 1860 Llano County, Texas, Census; 1870 Llano County, Texas, Census; Casner Family Genealogy Material, courtesy Foster Casner. Copy in author's files. Pete Casner later married Alice Columbia Arnold. He died at Alpine, Texas, in 1952.
49. Hiram Casner was born to Isaac Casner and Margaret Ann Hinds on April 21, 1839. Casner died on August 25, 1917.
50. 1850 Monroe County, Georgia, Census; Michael Redding to the author September 5, 2003; Ruth Reddick to Michael Redding, October 29, 2003, courtesy Michael Redding.
51. 1860 Monroe County, Georgia, Census; Ruth Reddick to the author, October 29, 2003; Michael Redding to the author September 5, 2003; correspondence from Melissa to the author, December 1, 2001; Ruth Reddick to the author, October 29, 2003. The 1860 census shows that James M. Redding owned real estate valued at \$2000 and personal property valued at \$9800. James M. Redding was killed at Griswoldsville during the Civil War.
52. Loveda (Loveday) Ann Lacy was born on March 16, 1858, in St. Clair County, Missouri. She was the daughter of Jacob Melbourne Lacy and Elizabeth Ann Armstrong.
53. Henry M. Holmes to Governor Richard Coke, September 8, 1875, Governor's Records, TSA.
54. Burnet County District Court Records, Cause 854.
55. *Ibid.*, Cause 877.

CHAPTER 7

1. David Johnson, *The Mason County "Hoo Doo" War, 1874–1902* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2006), 5–6. Hereafter cited as Johnson, *Hoo Doo War*.
2. DeMattos, "Johnny Ringo," 38.
3. Traywick, *Ringo*, 5.
4. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 131–33.
5. Jack Burrows, "John Ringo: The Story of a Western Myth," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 30, no. 4 (October 1980): 8. Hereafter cited as "Ringo Myth."
6. C. L. Sonnichsen, *Ten Texas Feuds* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971), 92–93.
7. Gatto, *Ringo*, 15.
8. *Ibid.*, 25.
9. Irene Marschall King, *John O. Meusebach* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 106–7; Johnson, *Hoo Doo War*, 26.
10. Don H. Biggers, *German Pioneers in Texas* (Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 1983), 57–61; R. H. Williams, *With the Border Ruffians* (1907. Repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 242–43.
11. Biggers, *German Pioneers*, 60.
12. Minnie Gandy Schmidt, "Schmidt Hereford Ranch, Inc.," *Edwards Plateau Historian* 8 (1978–82): 70.
13. Julius E. DeVos, "Mason County's Unsettled Years 1860–1880," *Edwards Plateau Historian* 7 (n. d.): 20.
14. Gilbert J. Jordan, *Yesterday in the Texas Hill Country* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1979), 100.
15. *Austin Weekly Statesman*, November 18, 1875.
16. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 132.
17. DeVos, 21.
18. *Austin Weekly Statesman*, October 17, 1875.
19. Max Amadeus Paulus Krueger, *Second Fatherland: The Life and Fortunes of a German Immigrant* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1976), 78.
20. *Ibid.*, 99.
21. Sonnichsen, *Ten Texas*, 90–91.
22. Drive Book of M. L. Hayes, c. 1874–1875. Courtesy Mason County Historical Society. Copy in author's files. Hereafter cited as Hayes, Drive Book.
23. Sonnichsen, 91.
24. *Burnet Bulletin*, May 23, 1874.
25. Richard Coke, George W. Todd to Richard Coke, February 9, 1874, Governor's Papers, TSA.
26. *Austin Weekly Statesman*, October 17, 1875.

27. Dan W. Roberts, *Rangers and Sovereignty* (Austin, Texas: State House Press, 1987), 92. Hereafter cited as Roberts, *Rangers*.
28. Johnson, *Ringo*, 28. The identification was originally based upon telephone interviews with George M. Taft, July 1988 and December 7, 1990.
29. 1860 Census, Burnet County, Texas.
30. Allen G. Hatley, "Did John Ringo Kill One More Man before Leaving Mason County?" *WOLA Journal* 11, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 30–31.
31. Author's interview with Karylon Russell, October 2005.
32. Rose and Sherry, 107–20.
33. George W. Todd to Richard Coke, February 9, 1874, Governor's Papers, TSA; Johnson, *Hoo Doo War*, 30–32.
34. Burnet Bulletin, September 5, 1874.
35. Ibid., *San Antonio Daily Express*, August 29, 1874. The *Express* and *Burnet Bulletin* letters are produced in their entirety in the author's history of the Hoo Doo War. See Johnson, *Hoo Doo War*, 242–49.
36. *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 24, 1874.
37. Gilbert J. Jordan, *A Biographical Sketch of Ernst and Lizette Jordan* (Dallas, Texas: Privately Published, 1931), 23. Hereafter cited as Jordan, *Ernst Jordan*.
38. Jordan, *Ernst Jordan*, 23; *Burnet Bulletin*, September 5, 1874; *San Antonio Daily Express*, August 29, 1874.
39. *Record of Criminals by Co[unty], crime, description*, Mason County, 58–59, Adjutant General's Records, TSA. Hereafter cited as AGR.
40. Mason County, Texas, District Court Records, Causes 1, 2 and 3; John B. Jones to William Steele, October 28, 1875, AGR, TSA.
41. Johnson, *Hoo Doo War*, 46.
42. 1860 Census, Burnet County, Texas.
43. 1870 Census, Burnet County, Texas.
44. Allen gave his date of birth as August 1845 for the 1900 census. This is consistent with the 1860 Llano County Census where his age is given as fifteen. However, the 1870 Burnet County, Texas, Census gives his age as twenty-seven which would agree with the Adams County 1850 Census. William Roberts Jr. married Lucy Methiabile Ladd on November 20, 1842. 1850 Adams County, Texas, Census; 1860 Llano County, Texas Census; 1870 Burnet County, Texas, Census, 1900 Galveston County, Texas, Census; Adams County, Illinois, Marriage Records.
45. Confederate Muster Rolls, TSA.
46. Williamson County, Texas, Marriage Records.
47. 1870 Census, Burnet County, Texas.
48. 1880 Census, Maverick County, Texas; State Police Muster Rolls, TSA.
49. Hayes, Drive Book.
50. Interview with LaVoy Taylor, July 29, 1983.
51. 1860 Census, Burnet County, Texas.
52. Burnet County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 390: Daniel Hester v. A. T. Taylor.
53. Adjutant General William Steele, *A List of Fugitives from Justice* (Austin, Texas: Adjutant General's Office, 1878), 77. Hereafter cited as 1878 Fugitives.
54. *Burnet Bulletin*, September 5, 1874.

CHAPTER 8

1. Lieutenant Daniel Webster Roberts to Major John B. Jones, January 15, 1876. Adjutant General's Records, TSA. Hereafter cited as AGR.
2. Family sources attest that Ringo drove cattle to Kansas in the early 1870s. Stuart N. Lake, generally unreliable, wrote, "That galaxy of shooting stars which reddened cowtown firmament in the eighteen-seventies included . . . John Ringo." Lake also writes, "[Brocius] and Ringo—family name Ringgold—were fearless gunmen of the first order, professional killers, trained in the wars of the Texas cattle barons. Each had encountered Wyatt Earp as marshal in Wichita and Dodge City"; Stuart N. Lake, *Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1931), 72, 235. Earp never served as a marshal in either town although he was a policeman at times during the 1870s. Earp was appointed a policeman in Wichita on April 21, 1875. Beyond Lake, no evidence Ringo met in Kansas has been located.
3. Thomas W. Gamel, *The Life of Thomas W. Gamel* (Mason, Texas: Privately Published, c. 1931), 18, hereafter cited as Gamel; Lucia M. Holmes, *The Lucia Holmes Diary, 1875–1876: The Hoo Doo War Years* (Mason, Texas: Mason County Historical Commission, 1985), entry for February 13, 1875. Hereafter cited as Holmes Diary.
4. Joseph Clark Baccus and Lucinda Brown were married in Lamar County in 1847. By 1856 the family was in Titus County where tax rolls show them owning one slave, five horses, sixty cattle and 157 acres of cropland. 1856 Titus County, Texas, Tax Rolls.
5. The divorce of Joseph and Lucinda Baccus effectively ended in 1857 when she abandoned him, according to Lucinda, due

to “cruel treatment and outrages” that Joseph inflicted on her. *Northern Standard*, May 22, 1858, and July 29, 1858. Courtesy Randy Farmer.

6. 1870 Census, Denton County, Texas.

7. Denton County, Texas, Marriage Records. Rachel was born July 7, 1830, to Henry and Sarah (Sally) Kincaid Cook in Green County, Illinois. She died on April 19, 1912, in Collin County.

8. Baccus family data, courtesy Goldie Seay. Mrs. Henry M. Holmes mentioned Josie Baccus in her diary following her husband’s death. “Mrs. [John] Gamel here on her way to see poor Mrs. [Baccus]. Mr. Backus [sic] buried this morning early.” Holmes Diary, entry for February 20, 1875.

9. 1875 Mason County, Texas, Tax Records.

10. Texas was open range, and cattlemen could and did have herds in more than one county. Attorney Henry M. Holmes recorded in November 1874 that “Elijah Backus” was from Mason. Bierschwale Collection, Henry M. Holmes Attorney’s Business Book, courtesy Texas State Archives. Hereafter cited as Holmes Attorney Book.

11. J. Marvin Hunter, “Brief History of Early Days in Mason County,” Part 3, *Frontier Times* 6, no. 4 (January, 1929): 162.

12. Holmes Attorney Book. The entry further notes that the plaintiff paid the costs.

13. Louisa Baccus was born June 6, 1829, to Enoch C. and Elizabeth Brown Baccus.

14. See Smallwood, James M., Barry A. Crouch, and Larry Peacock, *Murder and Mayhem: The War of Reconstruction in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press), 2003.

15. Johnie Lee Reeves to the author, August 1994.

16. Betty Hennig, “‘Frank’ Francis Johnson and Related Families,” unpublished manuscript, no date, courtesy Betty Hennig. Hereafter cited as Hennig Manuscript.

17. Ibid.

18. The origins of Rebecca “Becky” Stribling (or Stripling) are obscure. One source states she was an orphan raised by Bill White, a cousin of Scott Cooley. White is supposed to have been a cousin of the Youngers. This has not been proven definitively. She and Thomas Johnson were married May 23, 1858, in either Fredericksburg or Legion Valley. Their daughter, Nancy Elizabeth, was born January 17, 1865. Tula Townsend Wyatt, *The Seven Townsend Brothers of Texas 1826–1838, A Genealogy* (Austin, Texas: privately published, Austex Duplications, 1974), 89; Gillespie County, Texas, Marriage Book 1, 268; Johnie Lee Reeves Archives, Notes of Thomas Johnson; William Joseph “Will” Johnson Bible records, courtesy Johnie Lee Reeves.

19. Samantha Johnson was the daughter of William J. Johnson and Clementine Irvin Townsend and was born around 1848. She married her cousin, Asa Johnson, on March 29, 1866, in Hays County, Texas. Her child Fielty was born between March 1866 and February 1868.

20. Amanda Townsend was the daughter of William Spencer Townsend and his wife Nancy Johnson. She was born around 1850.

21. Matilda “Tilly” Friend was born Matilda Jane Jones on October 15, 1848, to Britton Jones and Leanah Reeves, a cousin of the Johnsons. She married John S. Friend on December 15, 1866. Tilly survived her ordeal and the couple later moved to El Dorado, Kansas. She died there on January 24, 1909.

22. Scott Zesch, *The Captured* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2004), 70–79; Wyatt, 125, 127; *Austin Tri-Weekly Gazette*, February 14, 1868; J. W. Wilbarger, *Indian Depredations in Texas* (1889. Rept. Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 1985), 633–37.

23. Record of Criminals by County, crime, description. Mason County, 58, AGR, TSA.

24. Bierschwale Collection, “Attorney’s Business Book—Henry M. Holmes,” 11; TSA. Hereafter cited as Holmes Attorney Book; 1870 Mason County, Texas, census; Jo Ann F. Hatch to the author, June 9, 1999.

25. Holmes Diary, February 17, 1875.

26. Gamel, 18. Adam Bradford was born May 7, 1826, in Dearborn County, Indiana, to William and Jane Carberry Bradford. Bradford arrived in Texas during the early 1840’s and settled in the Peter’s Colony near Ft. Worth. Later he moved to Austin and married Edna Jane Chapman on December 14, 1851. In 1863 the Bradfords moved to present day Menard County. During the Civil War he worked as a freighter and cattle buyer for the Confederacy. After the war ended he opened a store in what became Menard. In 1871 he helped organize Menard County. Adam Bradford died on March 3, 1904.

27. Hunter, “Brief History of Early Days in Mason County,” Part 3, 161–62.

28. Gamel, 18.

29. Ibid., 20.

30. Gamel, 20–21; Roberts, *Rangers*, 87–89; Holmes Diary, February 18, 1875; Sonnichsen, *Ten Texas Feuds*, 87; Johnson, *Hoo Doo War*, 56–60.

31. Holmes Diary, February 19, 1875.

32. Ibid.

33. *Houston Daily Telegraph*, March 3, 1875.

34. Phillip J. Rasch, *Warriors of Lincoln County* (Stillwater, Oklahoma: The National Association for Outlaw and Lawman History, 1998), 146; 1850 Graves County, Kentucky Census; *Record of Arrests*, State Police Ledger Book, 234–35, AGR, TSA.

35. *Flake’s Semi-Weekly Bulletin*, May 3, 1871.

36. *1878 Fugitives From Justice*, 33.
37. Holmes Attorney Book, 1–2.
38. In New Mexico Hall was poisoned by a woman, one of his victims. He survived the experience, but it left his health broken. Hall eventually moved to Colorado. He died at Cripple Creek on March 12, 1935.
39. Gamel, 4.
40. Roster of the State Police, AGR, TSA.
41. Holmes Diary, February 25, 1875.
42. Sonnichsen, 89.
43. Roberts to Jones, March 1, 1875, AGR, TSA.
44. Holmes Attorney Book, 4.
45. Miles Barler, *Early Days in Llano* (Llano, Texas: The Llano Times, n. d.), 32. Hereafter cited as Barler.
46. Holmes Diary, March 6 and March 7, 1875.
47. *Ibid.*, March 13, 1875.
48. Johnson, *Hoo Doo War*, 66–67; *Houston Daily Telegraph*, March 20, 1875; *Dallas Weekly Herald*, March 27, 1875.
49. Johnson, *John Ringo*, 66.
50. Holmes Diary, March 19, 1875.
51. *Ibid.*, March 22, 1875.
52. *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 30, 1875.
53. Holmes Diary, March 27, 1875.
54. Roberts to Jones, April 1, 1875.
55. Holmes Diary, April 8, 1875.
56. Burnet County District Court Records, Cause 854.
57. *Ibid.*
58. Interview, Joan DeKorte, October 28, 1993; Joan Buck DeKorte to the author, December 9, 1993; 1850 Mecklenbeurg County, North Carolina, Census; 1870 Mason County, Texas, Census; Newspaper clipping from an unknown paper, probably ca. 1902, courtesy Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.
59. Timothy Williamson military record, courtesy National Archives; DeVos, *Hoo Doo Antholopgy*, 187.
60. 1875 Mason County, Texas, Tax Rolls.
61. Gamel, 23.
62. *Austin Daily Statesman*, October 17, 1875.
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Ibid.*, May 18, 1875; Gamel, 23–24; C. L. Sonnichsen interview with Henry Doell Jr., Courtesy University of Texas at El Paso.
65. Holmes Diary, May 17, 1875. Holmes had petitioned the governor several months earlier following the Baccus lynching.

CHAPTER 9

1. 1850 Census, Izard County, Arkansas, and 1860 Census, Jack County, Texas. Martha Cooley died sometime prior to 1870.
2. *Dallas Herald*, February 10, 1872.
3. *Galveston Christian Advocate*, May 29, 1872. The sheriff was George W. Stevens. Stevens was originally appointed June 9, 1869, by General J. J. Reynolds' Special Order Number 136. He was later elected in 1869 and served until December 2, 1873.
4. 1870 Mortality Schedule, Jack County, Texas.
5. James B. Gillett, *Six Years with the Texas Rangers* (1925. Rept, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 24.
6. Texas Ranger Muster Roll, Company D, AGR, TSA.
7. *Austin Daily Statesman*, November 28, 1874.
8. Muster and Pay Records of Company D, AGR, TSA.
9. Gamel, 24.
10. *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 30, 1875.
11. Gatto, *Ringo*, 20.
12. Traywick, Ringo, 5; Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 131–33.
13. *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 30, 1875.
14. Burnet County District Court Records, Cause 854.
15. 1870 Census, Burnet County, Texas.
16. *Austin Daily Statesman*, July 21, 1875.
17. *Galveston News*, August 4, 1875; Sonnichsen, *Ten Texas Feuds*, 96–97; Holmes Diary, July 21, 1875; Gamel, 15–16; *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 30, 1875; *Austin Daily Statesman*, July 31, 1875; J. Marvin Hunter, "Brief History of the Early Days in Mason County," Part 2, *Frontier Times* 6, no. 2 (December 1928): 124; Johnson, *Hoo Doo War*, 85–89; David Johnson, "The Doell Killing: Feudal Vengeance or Private Murder?" *NOLA Quarterly* 1 (Summer 1986): 8–10.

18. Nimitz Hotel Register, Fredericksburg, Texas, microfilm.
19. Gamel, 24.
20. Ibid., 24–25.
21. *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 30, 1875.
22. Julius E. DeVos, editor, *One Hundred Years of the Hilda (Bethel) Methodist Church and Parent Organizations* (Hilda, Texas: Hilda United Methodist Church, 1973), 47.
23. Gamel, 30.
24. Burrows, “Ringo Myth,” 8; Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 135.
25. Julius E. DeVos, *Mason County Historical Book*, Supplement III (Mason, Texas: Mason County Historical Commission and Mason County Historical Society, 1999), 65.
26. Johnson, *Hoo Doo War*, 95–96; David Johnson, “Revenge in Mason County, Texas,” *NOLA Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1985): 7–8, 12.
27. Burnet County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 854.
28. Nimitz Hotel Register, Fredericksburg, Texas, microfilm.
29. *Austin Daily Statesman*, August 24, 1875.
30. The late historian Jerry Ponder placed the date of Miller’s death on September 2. Additionally a J. P. Miller was shot and wounded during the feud on October 29. Further details on the Millers are lacking.
31. *San Antonio Daily Herald*, August 30, 1875.
32. Burnet County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 880.
33. Ibid., Cause 879.
34. Ibid., Cause 895.
35. Ibid., Causes 879 and 880.
36. Ibid., Cause 895.
37. Ibid.
38. Gamel, 25.
39. Roberts, *Rangers*, 97–98.
40. Gamel, 25.
41. The story of the mutilation of Baird’s body is common among descendants on both sides of the feud.
42. *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 14, 1875.
43. Henry M. Holmes to Richard Coke, September 8, 1875, AGR, TSA.
44. *Dallas Weekly Herald*, September 25, 1875.
45. Johnson, *Hoo Doo War*, 101.
46. Personal interview with Jane Hoerster, March 8, 1994.
47. Michael M. Hickey, *John Ringo: The Final Hours, A Tale of the Old West* (Honolulu, Hawaii: Talei Publishers, 1995), from the introduction by Ben T. Traywick, xv.
48. Author’s interview with H. V. “Todd” Faris, June 24, 1983.
49. Author’s interviews with Foster Casner, September 14, 1982, and Todd Faris, June 24, 1983. Foster Casner, John Olney’s grandson, heard the story both from his grandfather and from Sam Tanner.
50. All of the families noted supported John Baird during the feud. The presence of the man identified by Gamel as Williams, quite likely Jim Williams, points to the presence of the Redding brothers.
51. Gamel, 26.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Nina Legge to the author, May 3, 1986.
55. Gamel, 27.

CHAPTER 10

1. James M. Williams married Arabella Lacy, a daughter of Jacob M. Lacy and Elizabeth Ann Armstrong, on December 7, 1873.
2. Gamel, 27.
3. Ibid.
4. Booker Sweeney was born around 1848 in Missouri. He was described as a powerful man weighing over three hundred pounds who “could pick up a barrel of flour with his teeth and raise it to table height.” In 1870 he was working in Burnet County as a farm laborer. With him was his wife Mariah. Selma Metzenthin Raunick and Margaret Schade, *The Kothmanns of Texas 1845–1931* (Austin, Texas: Van Boeckmann-Jones Company, 1931), 90–91; 1870 Burnet County, Texas, Census.
5. 1870 Mason County, Texas, Census; Texas Ranger Muster Rolls, AGR, TSA.
6. Frank Tinker, “No One Called Him Johnny,” *Tucson Citizen*, October 30, 1982.
7. Jones reported that at Hedwig’s Hill “fifteen or twenty men, armed with Winchester carbines and six-shooters rose up

from behind a stone wall ready to fight.”

8. Holmes Diary, October 4, 1875.
9. *Austin Daily Statesman*, December 4, 1875.
10. Roberts, 91; Holmes Diary, October 3, 1875; Doell interview.
11. James B. O’Neil, *They Die But Once* (New York: Knight Publications, 1935), 95. Hereafter cited as O’Neil.
12. No contemporary account of Faris’ killing has yet been located. One family tradition has it that he was shot by accident. Another states that he was killed in a gunfight by a man named Fulk. The matter remains unresolved.
13. *Galveston Daily News*, November 25, 1875.
14. *Ibid.*, December 3, 1875. Alazan’s letter was dated November 26, 1875, from San Antonio. The error of calling John Ringo “Ringgold” was common in ensuing years. Ringo never used an alias.
15. Monthly Return, Company A, November 1875, AGR, TSA.
16. Burnet County, Texas, District Court Records, Causes 925 and 926.
17. *Austin Daily Statesman*, January 2, 1876. The article was also reprinted in the *San Antonio Daily Express* on January 5, 1876.
18. *Austin Daily Statesman*, January 4, 1876; *Austin Weekly Statesman*, January 6, 1876.
19. Burchard Dangers translator, “Church Records Of The Protestant Congregation At Fredericksburg” (Fredericksburg, Texas: Unpublished Manuscript, n. d.). Courtesy Fredericksburg Public Library; Doell interview.
20. Kerr County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 45.
21. 1870 Llano County, Texas, Census; 1875 Mason County, Texas, Tax Rolls.
22. Llano County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 372.
23. *Galveston Daily News*, January 28, 1876.
24. *Austin Daily Statesman*, February 1, 1876.
25. Burnet County, Texas, District Court Records, Causes 925 and 926.
26. *Ibid.*, Cause 854.
27. *Ibid.*, Causes 925 and 926.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Darrell Debo, ed., *Burnet County History*, Volume II (Burnet, Texas: Burnet County Commissioners Court, 1979).
30. Gatto, *Ringo*, 181.
31. H. V. “Todd” Faris interview, June 24, 1983.
32. *Fayette County New Era*, May 12, 1876.
33. *San Antonio Daily Express*, May 19, 1876.
34. Testimony of J. T. Walker, Lampasas County, Texas, District Court Records. Courtesy Jeff Jackson.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*; H. V. “Todd” Faris interview, June 24, 1983; *Galveston Weekly News*, February 18, 1878; Ed Bartholomew to the author, September 7, 1984. Bartholomew listed “men confirmed (and unconfirmed)” that he believed were in the 40 man gang that liberated Ringo and Cooley. His list included E. D. Steadman, Andy Murchison, Bill Cavin, Ed Brown, James P. Mason, Bud and Champ Faris, Bill and Tom Redding, John Baird, V. E. Vaughn, John Carson, Joe Olney, and Emanuel “Mannen” Clements among others.
37. Personal interview with Foster Casner, summer 1983.
38. Lampasas County, Texas, District Court Records, Testimony of W. P. Hoskins, courtesy Jeff Jackson.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Holmes Diary, May 8, 1876.
41. *Ibid.*, May 9, 1876.
42. *Galveston Daily News*, May 23, 1876.
43. Personal interview with H. V. “Todd” Faris, June 24, 1983.
44. Gamel, 30.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Personal interview with Max Gipson, caretaker of Miller Creek Cemetery where Scott Cooley is buried, summer 1988; Gamel, 30.
47. *Houston Daily Telegraph*, June 14, 1876.
48. Personal interview, Vickie Thomas, undated.
49. *Dallas Daily Herald*, June 11, 1876.
50. *Austin Daily Statesman*, June 9, 1876.
51. *San Antonio Daily Herald*, June 16, 1876.
52. *Dallas Daily Herald*, May 27, 1875.

CHAPTER 11

1. 1876 San Jose, California, City Directory.

2. Santa Clara County, California, Probate Record 983.
3. *Liberty Tribune*, August 4, 1876.
4. Burnet County District Court Records, Cause 977.
5. *Burnet Bulletin*, July 14, 1876.
6. Robert K. DeArment, *Alias Frank Canton* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 35–36.
7. Josiah W. Horner was born September 15, 1849, to John W. Horner and Mary Jane Clemmons. Following his outlaw years in Texas, Horner changed his name to Frank M. Canton. Under this name he served with distinction in law enforcement in Oklahoma. He died on September 27, 1927.
8. *Galveston Daily News*, August 18, 1876.
9. *Burnet Bulletin*, August 25, 1876.
10. *Burnet Bulletin*, September 1, 1876.
11. *Austin Daily Statesman*, June 14, 1876.
12. Gatto, *Ringo*, 44.
13. *Junction Eagle*, February 23, 1928; “Fifty-two Years in West Texas,” *Frontier Times* 5, no. 8 (May 1928): 341.
14. Ruby Mosley, “J. A. Joiner,” American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers’ Project 1936–1940, unpublished manuscript.
15. Holmes Diary, September 5, 1876.
16. Gatto, *Ringo*, citing the *Austin Statesman* of September 23, 1876, 44.
17. Barler, 32.
18. *Burnet Bulletin*, September 8 1876; *Austin Daily Statesman*, September 15, 1876.
19. *Burnet Bulletin*, September 15, 1876.
20. Johnson, *Hoo Doo War*, 172–75; Sharon Cunningham and Mark Boardman, eds., *Revenge!* (Lafayette, Indiana: Scarlet Mask Enterprises, 2004), 121–23.
21. Author’s interview with Foster Casner, September 18, 1982.
22. Ibid.; author’s interview with Jim MacFarland, September 18, 1982.
23. *Burnet Bulletin*, September 15, 1876.
24. The Williams involved in Chaney’s murder had been captured and brought to trial in Mason, but Mrs. Chaney could not identify him as one of the killers and he was released.
25. During the 1870s the Dublin brothers became well-known outlaws in the region. Dick Dublin was later killed and his brothers were both sent to the penitentiary. Upon their release they settled in west Texas where they became outstanding citizens, successfully living down their violent past.
26. Barler, 43–44.
27. *Galveston Daily News*, October 21, 1876; *West Texas Free Press*, October 28, 1876.
28. Haynes manuscript.
29. J. J. Bozarth became sheriff of Llano County following the forced resignation of William P. Hoskins. Barler alleges that Bozarth operated with the mob. He died on November 20, 1880, while in office, probably of tuberculosis.
30. *Austin Daily Statesman*, November 7, 1876.
31. Ibid., December 1, 1876.
32. Cornelius “Neal” Cain was the son of Joel Y. and Philadelphia Cain.
33. Thompson was later transferred back to Kansas for the accidental killing of C. B. Whitney. He was eventually freed.
34. *Austin Daily Statesman*, December 1, 1876.
35. *Galveston Daily News*, November 6, 1876.
36. *Burnet Bulletin*, November 14, 1876.
37. Ibid., December 22, 1876.
38. Ibid., December 1, 1876.
39. Ibid., December 8, 1876.
40. Ibid., December 15, 1876.
41. *Galveston Daily News*, December 3, 1876.
42. O’Neil, 135–36.
43. John Hancock Lacy, narrator, “Life of John Hancock Lacy,” unpublished manuscript courtesy Helen C. Marschall.
44. *Burnet Bulletin*, January 26, 1877.
45. Mason County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 21.
46. Jackson & Jackson reporting, *Cases Argued And Adjudged in the Court of Appeals of the State of Texas During the Austin Term, 1877, and Part of the Tyler Term, 1877* (St. Louis, Missouri: Soule, Thomas & Wentworth, 1878), II, 292.
47. Ibid.
48. Mason County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 21.
49. *Austin Daily Statesman*, July 15, 1877.
50. Lampasas County, Texas, District Court Records, John Wesley Hardin to Jane Bowen Hardin, April 13, 1879, courtesy

Chuck Parsons.

51. Mason County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 21.
52. Monthly Return, Company D, November 1877, TSA.
53. *Galveston Daily News*, December 8, 1877; Dave Johnson, "Horror on the Colorado," *True West* 45, no. 10 (October 1998): 15–17; Chuck Parsons, "'Mervyn' A Poetical Correspondent," *The Brand Book* (London, England: The English Westerners' Society, Winter 1988–1989), 5–8. Mervyn was Mervyn B. Davis who died June 18, 1912, at Waco, Texas.
54. *Galveston Daily News*, December 11, 1877.
55. Hardin, *Life*, 126.
56. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 135.
57. William P. Longley to Milton Mast, October 29, 1877. Courtesy Chuck Parsons.
58. Mason County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 21.
59. *Galveston Daily News*, January 17, 1878.
60. *The Texas Capital* (Austin), December 16, 1877.

CHAPTER 12

1. Traywick, *Ringo*, 6.
2. *Lampasas Dispatch*, February 7, 1878; *Galveston Weekly News*, February 18, 1878.
3. Allen G. Hatley, "Did John Ringo Kill One More Man Before Leaving Mason County?" *Western Outlaw-Lawman Association (WOLA) Journal* 11, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 31.
4. Personal interview with Karylon Russell, October, 2005; Karylon Russell to the author, May 2, 2006.
5. Mason County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 21.
6. Monthly Returns, Company D, February 1878, AGR, TSA.
7. Mason County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 21.
8. Lampasas County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 380.
9. Mason County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 21.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. Gatto, *Ringo*, 51; *Galveston Daily News*, May 31, 1878.
13. Lampasas County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 380.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Mason County, Texas, Election Records, TSA.
16. Irene Marschall King, *John O. Meusebach: German Colonizer in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 169; Johnson, *Hoo Doo War*, 119–20; Petition, citizens of Loyal Valley to John B. Jones, October 4, 1875, AGR, TSA.
17. Mason County, Texas, Records of Marks and Brands.
18. Janaloo Hill to the author, December 22, 1982.
19. Frank Tinker, "No One Called Him Johnny," *Tucson Citizen*, October 30, 1982; personal interview with Jane Hoerster, summer 1984.
20. Karylon Russell to the author, December 31, 2005.
21. Henry G. Cox to Chuck Parsons as "the Answer Man," Spring 1998, courtesy Chuck Parsons.
22. "Fifty-two Years in West Texas," *Frontier Times* 5, no. 8 (February 1928): 341–42. Reprinted from the *Junction (Texas) Eagle* of February 23, 1928.
23. Author's interviews with John Olney, June 1, 1983, and January 10, 1985.
24. Bell County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 2013.
25. *Ibid.*, Cause 2088.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Bell County, Texas, District Court Records, Cause 2013.
28. Governor Lew Wallace to Captain Henry Carroll, March 11, 1879. This and the other documents cited are in the Lew Wallace Collection in the Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana. Hereafter cited as Wallace Collection.
29. Undated list, Wallace Collection.
30. "Statements made by the Kid," March 23, 1879, Wallace Collection. "Gist" Hardin is probably John Wesley Hardin. There is no evidence to suggest that Hardin knew any of the Olneys.
31. Bob Alexander, *Desert Desperadoes! The Banditti of Southwestern New Mexico* (Silver City, New Mexico: Gila Books, 2006), 137.
32. Lampasas County, Texas, District Court Records.
33. *Tombstone Epitaph*, July 22, 1882.
34. Peter Brand, "Sherman W. McMaster(s) The El Paso Salt War, Texas Rangers & Tombstone," *Western Outlaw and Lawman Association (WOLA) Journal*, Winter, 1999, 6.
35. Interviews with John Olney, June 1, 1983, and January 10, 1985.

36. No contemporary evidence of this jail break has been located to date.
37. Daniel D. Aranda, "Apache Depredations in Dona Ana County: An Incident From Victorio's War," *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* 3, no. 1 (January 1996): 3.
38. Jennie Parks Ringgold, *Frontier Days in the Old Southwest* (San Antonio, Texas: The Naylor Company, 1952), 1–15.
39. *Ibid.*, 15.
40. Jennie Parks Ringgold to Ben Olney, December 12, 1953, courtesy Annie May Durrant. Copy in author's files.
41. Jennie Parks Ringgold to Ben Olney, April 4, 1950, courtesy Annie May Durrant. Copy in author's files.
42. Aranda, 3.
43. Aranda, 4, 7.
44. *Ibid.*, 4.
45. Ringgold, 1–15; Aranda, 4–5; Daniel Aranda, "An Episode from Victorio's War," *Real West*, February 1984.
46. J. C. Hancock File, Arizona Pioneers' Historical Society, Tucson, Arizona. Hereafter cited as Hancock File.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Personal interview with Frank and John Stark by Emil Schaaf, Audio 400, University of Arizona, Special Collections.
49. *Tombstone Epitaph*, July 22, 1882.
50. Erwin to Ferguson, November 27, 1970.
51. Personal interview with Walker W. "Bud" Jordan, July 7, 1989.
52. Jim Peterson to the author, March 30, 1984.
53. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, January 19, 1880.
54. *Arizona Star*, December 14, 1879.

CHAPTER 13

1. *The Pioneer* (San Jose), December 13, 1879; J. D. Young, *Historical Sketch of the State Normal School at San Jose, California, with a Catalogue of Its Graduates and a Record of Their Work for Twenty-Seven Years* (Sacramento, California: State Office, 1889).
2. James C. Hancock File, Arizona Pioneers' Historical Society, Tucson, Arizona. Hereafter cited as Hancock File.
3. Bob Alexander, *John H. Behan: Sacrificed Sheriff* (Silver City, New Mexico: High-Lonesome Books, 2002), 59. Hereafter cited as Alexander, *Behan*.
4. Ed Bartholomew, *Wyatt Earp: The Man and the Myth* (Toyahvale, Texas: Frontier Book Company, 1964), 30. Hereafter cited as Bartholomew, *Earp Myth*.
5. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, February 11 and February 18, 1883; Rasch, Philip J., *Warriors of Lincoln County* (Stillwater, Oklahoma: The National Association for Outlaw and Lawman History, Inc., 1998), 152; Bob Alexander, *Sheriff Harvey Whitehill: Silver City Stalwart* (Silver City, New Mexico: High-Lonesome Books, 2005), 159–64. Hereafter cited as Alexander, *Whitehill*.
6. Larry D. Ball, *The United States Marshals of New Mexico and Arizona Territories, 1846–1912* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), 108.
7. Douglas D. Martin, *Tombstone's Epitaph* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1951), 146.
8. *Tombstone Epitaph*, October 20, 1880.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Ball, *Marshals*, 115–16.
11. Paul Cool, "Bob Martin: A Rustler in Paradise," *The Journal* 11, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 42. Hereafter cited as Cool, "Martin"; Causes 357, 369, 362 and 363, Third Judicial District, New Mexico Territory, Record Group 21, National Archives, Denver, Colorado.
12. Cool, "Martin," 25; Bob Alexander, *Dangerous Dan Tucker: New Mexico's Deadly Lawman* (Silver City, New Mexico: High-Lonesome Books, 2001), 35–43. Hereafter cited as Alexander, *Tucker*.
13. Cool, "Martin," 25–28; Gatto, *Curly Bill*, 11–23; J. A. Tays to John B. Jones, November 6, 1878, AGR, TSA; Alexander, *Desert Desperadoes*, 112.
14. *Arizona Star*, January 22, 1881.
15. E. B. Pomroy to Wayne MacVeagh, June 23, 1881, Record Group 60, "Materials relating to the COWBOY troubles and to the investigation of Marshal C. P. Dake," National Archives, Washington, D. C. Hereafter cited as RG60.
16. John J. Linn, *Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Texas* (1883. Rept., Austin, Texas: State House Press, 1986), 322. Mayberry B. "Mustang" Gray was born in Spartanburg County around 1817. Gray had come to Texas in 1835 and settled in Austin's fifth colony. Gray served in the Mexican War and was responsible for the massacre of numerous men at La Mesa Ranch in Mexico in response to an attack on the Patterson–Rogers freight train at Arroyo Colorado. He died of either cholera or yellow fever around 1848.
17. C. M. Chase, *The Editor's Run in New Mexico and Colorado* (Fort Davis, Texas: Frontier Book Company, 1968), 127.
18. Lynn R. Bailey, *The Valiants: The Tombstone Rangers and Apache War Frivolities* (Tucson, Arizona: Westernlore Press, 1999), 17.

19. George W. Parsons, *The Private Journal of George W. Parsons* (Tombstone, Arizona: *Tombstone Epitaph*, 1972), 50, entry for May 22, 1880; George W. Parsons, *A Tenderfoot in Tombstone: The Private Journal of George Whitwell Parsons: The Turbulent Years: 1880–82*, Lynn R. Bailey, editor (Tucson, Arizona: Westernlore Press, 1996), 50, entry for May 22, 1880. Hereafter cited as Parsons Journal and Bailey, *Tenderfoot* respectively. The edition published by the *Tombstone Epitaph* was the original WPA that, while a valuable contribution to Arizona studies, contained a number of errors. Bailey's annotated and edited rendition of the diary corrected many of these errors.

20. Ball, *Marshals*, 108.

21. The men in question were Silas St. John, James Hughes, James Laing, and William Cunningham. St. John survived the attack. The killers were identified as Guadalupe and Pablo Ramirez and Boniface Miranda.

22. Ralph Rambo, *Trailing the California Bandit Tiburcio Vasquez 1835–1875* (No City, California: Privately Published, 1968), 4.

23. *Dallas Daily Herald*, December 25, 1875.

24. *Brenham Banner* (Texas), May 17, 1873.

25. C. R. Perry to John B. Jones, August 25, 1874; Johnson, *Hoo Doo War*, 49.

26. Chuck Parsons and Marianne E. Hall Little, *Captain L. H. McNelly—Texas Ranger—The Life and Times of a Fighting Man* (Austin, Texas: State House Press, 2001), 159–279.

27. Letter from the Secretary of War, Executive Document No. 93, House of Representatives, 45th Congress, Second Session, Testimony of Judge G. N Garcia, March 8, 1878.

28. Marcos E. Kinevan, *Frontier Cavalryman, Lieutenant John Bigelow with the Buffalo Soldiers in Texas* (El Paso, Texas: Texas Western Press, 1998), 250.

29. *Arizona Citizen*, November 4, 1871.

30. *San Antonio Daily Herald*, September 11, 1875.

31. W. R. Turnbull, "Mexican Bandits," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* 5, no. 3 (September 1870): 244–50. Cirilo Gil was over eighty when he was murdered.

32. Maggie S. Roberson, "Trouble Rode Out of Chihuahua," *True West* 16, no. 1 (October 1968): passim.

33. Cornelius Finley had previously served as county clerk in Santa Clara County, California. He was appointed Deputy US Marshal in August 1878 and served only ten days in office. Bob Ernst, *Deadly Affrays: The Violent Deaths of the US Marshals* (Lafayette, Indiana: Scarlet Mask Enterprises, 2006), 90–91.

34. John Hicks Adams was born in Illinois on June 13, 1820. He had served in the Mexican War and on July 14, 1864, while sheriff of Santa Clara County, Arizona, killed Confederate guerilla John Clendenning in a gunfight. Adams served as sheriff of Santa Clara County from 1864 through 1876 when he moved to Arizona. Like Cornelius Finley he served only ten days before he was killed. Ernst, 1–2.

35. *Ibid.*, 91.

36. *Tucson Weekly Citizen*, September 4, 1880.

37. John J. Gosper to Secretary of State James G. Blaine, September 30, 1881, Record Group 60, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

38. *Arizona Citizen*, August 23, 1880.

39. Parsons Journal, 78; Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 81–82, entry for August 31, 1880.

40. *Tombstone Nugget*, September 4, 1880.

41. *Arizona Citizen*, September 4, 1880.

42. *Arizona Star*, September 2, 1880.

43. Britton Davis, *The Truth About Geronimo* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 31.

44. Leon C. Metz, *Border: The U. S.–Mexican Line* (El Paso, Texas: Mangan Books, 1989), 406.

CHAPTER 14

1. Pima County, Arizona, District Court Records, courtesy Steve Gatto.

2. Robert N. Mullin Collection, Nita Stewart Haley Memorial Library, Midland, Texas.

3. Glenn G. Boyer, "Curly Bill Has Been Killed at Last," *Real West*, June 1984, 32.

4. Gatto, *Ringo*, 58–59.

5. *Tombstone Nugget*, October 29, 1880.

6. Burns, 94.

7. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 125.

8. "Reminiscences of a Stranger," monograph dated July 29, 1927, Arizona Pioneer's Historical Society, Tucson, Arizona.

9. Grant County, New Mexico, Deed Records, courtesy Steve Gatto.

10. *Ibid.* 11. Maggie McClure to the author, undated.

12. Janaloo Hill, "Yours Until Death, William Grounds," *True West*, March–April, 1973, 55; copy of letter courtesy Maggie McClure.

13. J. B. Collins to B. M. Jacobs, July 17, 1880, University of Arizona Special Collections, Tucson, Arizona.

14. William A. Duffen, "'Jollification'—Arizona Style: A Description of Gunplay in 1880," *Arizona and the West* 1 (1959): 282.
15. Alford E. Turner, "The Clantons of Apache County," *Real West Annual* (1980).
16. Bartholomew, *Earp Myth*, 81.
17. Gatto, *Ringo*, 60.
18. Philip Ashton Rollins, *The Cowboy* (1922; repr. New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), 293.
19. "Reminiscences of A. M. Franklin," undated manuscript, Arizona Pioneers Historical Society, Tucson, Arizona.
20. Mattie B. Cushing and M. Enna Ringo to Mrs. J. H. (Minerva) Letton, October 5, 1934, courtesy David L. Ringo. Copy in author's collection.
21. Gatto, *Ringo*, 73.
22. *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, March 27, 1881.
23. Gatto, *Ringo*, 69.
24. *Arizona Daily Star*, August 31, 1880.
25. *Tombstone Nugget*, October 19, 1880.
26. Record of Pima County Board of Supervisors 1880, Arizona Historical Society Library, Tucson, Arizona.
27. *Ibid.*; Gatto, *Ringo*, 70.
28. Grant County, New Mexico, Land Records. Copy courtesy Steve Gatto. See also Steve Gatto, "Johnny Ringo, Land and Cattle Speculator," *NOLA Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1994): 9–10.
29. Hancock File.
30. John P. Gray Manuscript, Arizona Pioneer's Historical Society, Tucson, Arizona; Reminiscences of Henry Morgan, Arizona Pioneer's Historical Society, Tucson, Arizona; *Arizona Range News*, May 10, 1907.
31. *Tombstone Epitaph*, November 7, 1880.
32. Fred White was born in New York around 1849 and may have reached Arizona as early as 1873.
33. Gatto, *Ringo*, 72; Mike Anderson, "Posses and Politics in Pima County: The Administration of Sheriff Charlie Shibell," *Journal of Arizona History* 27, no. 3 (Autumn 1986): 272–75.
34. *Arizona Star*, January 22, 1881.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Richard Van Valkenburgh, "Who Was Elected Sheriff?" [Arizona] *Sheriff's Magazine*, February 1949.
37. *Arizona Daily Star*, April 28, 1881.
38. Record of Pima County Board of Supervisors 1880, Arizona Historical Society Library, Tucson, Arizona.
39. Gatto, *Ringo*, 73.
40. *Arizona Weekly Star*, March 21, 1881.
41. *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, March 24, 1881.
42. Grant County, New Mexico, Land Records, copy courtesy Steve Gatto. See also Steve Gatto, "Johnny Ringo, Land and Cattle Speculator," *NOLA Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1994): 9–10.

CHAPTER 15

1. Michael M. Hickey, *John Ringo: The Final Hours, A Tale of the Old West* (Honolulu, Hawaii: Talei Publishers, 1995), 5.
2. Bartholomew, *Earp Myth*, *passim*.
3. Ball, *Marshals*, 116.
4. Lynn R. Bailey, *The Valiants: The Tombstone Rangers and Apache War Frivolities* (Tucson, Arizona: Westernlore Press, 1999), 17.
5. Darlinda Diaz-Gonzalez, "Billy Claiborne, Arizona's Billy the Kid," *NOLA Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (July–September 2005): 10.
6. Chuck Parsons to the author, June 28, 1994.
7. Some writers attempt to establish that Alonzo Clanton was Peter Alonzo Clanton. There is no contemporary evidence to this effect. A posse killed a Peter Blanton, whose name was given erroneously in some newspaper accounts as Clanton, in 1877. For a full discussion of this see Sue C. Van Slyke and Dave Johnson, "Pete Clanton—What's in a Name?" *NOLA Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1994).
8. Confederate Muster Rolls, TSA.
9. *Ibid.*; Record Group 109, "Proceedings of the Court Martial in the Case of John W. Clanton, Company B, Parson's Regt. Cavalry," National Archives, Washington, D. C.
10. Confederate Muster Rolls, TSA.
11. Van Slyke and Johnson, "Pete Clanton—What's in a Name?" 17.
12. Don Chaput, *Virgil Earp Western Peace Officer* (Encampment, Wyoming: Affiliated Writers of America, 1994), 103.
13. Casey Tefertiller, *Wyatt Earp: The Life Behind the Legend* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997), 43, hereafter cited as *Earp Legend*. The author cites no contemporary references as evidence of this statement.
14. Paula Mitchell Marks, *And Die in the West* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1989), 26.
15. Gary L. Roberts, *Doc Holliday: The Life And Legend* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2006), 163, hereafter cited as

Holliday.

16. Lynn R. Bailey, *Henry Clay Hooker and the Sierra Bonita* (Tucson, Arizona: Westernlore Press, 1998), 16.
17. Henry B. Crawford, "Beef for the Bluecoats," *Ranch Record*, Spring 2006, 26.
18. *Tucson Citizen*, December 13, 1873.
19. *Ibid.*, September 12, 1874.
20. A number of major articles have dealt with the Clantons. See Alford E. Turner, "The Clantons of Apache County," *Real West Annual*, 1980; Sue C. Van Slyke, "The Truth About the Clantons of Tombstone," *NOLA Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1982); and Sue C. Van Slyke and Dave Johnson, "Kin to the Clantons," *NOLA Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1990).
21. Turner, "The Clantons of Apache County," passim. Hereafter cited as Turner, "Clantons." There is no contemporary evidence that Clanton was involved in any cattle theft activities prior to his death when he was charged with his brother Phin. Phin Clanton was later pardoned when it was found that he had been convicted on perjured testimony.
22. Dan L. Thrapp, *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography*, 3 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 273–74.
23. Steve Gatto, author, and Neil B. Carmony ed., *The Real Wyatt Earp: A Documentary Biography* (Silver City, New Mexico: High-Lonesome Books, 2000), 86. Hereafter cited as Gatto, *Real Earp*.
24. Diaz-Gonzalez, 7.
25. Sarah Grace Bakarich, *Gunsmoke: The Story of old Tombstone* (No Publisher, 1927), 88–89.
26. 1880 Pima County, Arizona Territory, Census.
27. The McLaury had children were: Ebenezer Rowland, born September 16, 1833; Margaret Findley, born June 9, 1836; Hugh, born June 13, 1838; Edmund, born August 1, 1840; Mary Elizabeth, born October 25, 1842; William Rowland, born December 6, 1844; Margarey Agnes, born March 14, 1847; Robert Findley "Frank," Christiana, born February 25, 1851; Thomas Clark, and Sarah Caroline, born April 22, 1855.
28. For the McLaury family see Rev. Lyle MacLaury, *The Families McClaughry* (Interlaken, New York: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1986), and C. C. McClaughry, *Genealogy of the McClaughry Family* (Anamosa, Iowa: Privately Published, 1913).
29. Lynn R. Bailey, *Cochise County Stalwarts*, Volume 2 (Tucson, Arizona: Westernlore Press, 2000), 17.
30. *Arizona Daily Star*, November 27, 1880; *Arizona Weekly Star*, December 2, 1880. Bartholomew first uncovered the article dealing with Turner's pursuit of the horse thieves and published it in 1964. See Bartholomew, *Earp Myth*, 91–92.
31. *Arizona Daily Citizen*, December 7, 1880.
32. *Ibid.*, Bob Alexander, *Sheriff Harvey Whitehill: Silver City Stalwart* (Silver City, New Mexico: High-Lonesome Books, 2005), 119. Hereafter cited as Alexander, *Whitehill*. Cool, "Martin," 39.
33. Cool, "Martin," 39.
34. *Arizona Daily Star*, November 27, 1880; *Arizona Weekly Star*, December 2, 1880; *Arizona Daily Citizen*, December 7, 1880; Cool, "Martin," 37–40.
35. William M. Breakenridge, *Helldorado* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 226. Hereafter cited as Breakenridge.
36. *Dodge City Times*, August 17, 1878.
37. *Las Vegas Gazette*, March 20, 1881; Alexander, *Whitehill*, 121–22; Ed Bartholomew, *Western Hard-Cases and Gunfighters Named Smith* (Ruidoso, New Mexico: Frontier Book Company, 1960), 76. Hereafter cited as Bartholomew, *Smith*.
38. Philip J. Rasch, "'Six-Shooter' and 'Three-Shooter' Smith," *NOLA Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1985): 9; Chuck Parsons and Gary P. Fitterer, *Captain C. B. McKinney: The Law in South Texas* (Wolfe City, Texas: Henington Publishing Company, 1993), 51–52.
39. Pioneer Foundation Interview Number 504: Wayne Whitehill, courtesy Bob Alexander.
40. Rasch, "'Six-Shooter' and 'Three-Shooter' Smith," 9.
41. *Denver Tribune*, May 16, 1882.
42. Newton Jasper Earp was the oldest son of Nicholas Porter Earp and Abigail Storm and was born October 7, 1837.
43. Jean Whitten Edwards, *Earp Family Genealogy* (Breakenridge, Texas: Breck Printing, 1991), 136, 142; Glenn G. Boyer, *Wyatt Earp: Facts*, Volume 4 (Rodeo, New Mexico: Historical Research Associates, 1997), 8; Roy B. Young, *James Cooksey Earp: Out of the Shadows* (Apache, Oklahoma: Young & Sons Enterprises, 2006), 6–7. Hereafter cited as Young, *James Earp*.
44. James C. Earp Military Record, National Archives, Washington, D. C.
45. 1870 Deer Lodge County, Montana, Census.
46. Young, *James Earp*, 10.
47. Don Chaput, *Virgil Earp: Western Peace Officer* (Encampment, Wyoming: Affiliated Writers of America, 1994), 8. Hereafter cited as Chaput.
48. Virgil W. Earp Military Record, National Archives, Washington, D. C.
49. Ellen's family later moved to Walla Walla, Washington, where she married Thomas Eaton in 1867. Earp's biographer suggests her parents had a change of heart about her marrying an American (Chaput, 11). This is possible, but an equally compelling argument can be made that it was not Americans they objected to but the Earps themselves.

50. Casey Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 4.
51. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 4; Bartholomew, *Earp Story*, 25.
52. Chaput, 18. Curiously, the author makes no mention of the fight with the Sutherlands and Brummetts. Wyatt Earp had a violent temper and in the years following it has been documented that he struck and beat both men and women in fits of anger. If Wyatt attempted to force his wife to work as a prostitute as he did his later wives, it appears very likely that her brothers would be more than a little angry, particularly if she was beaten upon refusal. This remains a matter of speculation.
53. *Southwest Missourian*, June 16, 1870; Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 4–5; Gatto, *Real Earp*, 10–11. According to Gatto, there was extensive embezzlement of funds involved.
54. Cause 21, U. S. versus Wyatt S. Earp and Edward Kennedy, National Archives, Federal Records Center, Fort Worth, Texas; Bartholomew, *Earp Story*, 33–42; Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 5; Gatto, *Earp*, 12–15.
55. Roger Jay, “Another Earp Arrest?” *NOLA Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (October–December 2004): 19–23; Roger Jay, “‘The Peoria Bumner’: Wyatt Earp’s Lost Year,” *Wild West* 2003, 46–52. Hereafter cited as Jay, “Earp Arrest” and Jay, “Peoria Bumner” respectively.
56. Jay, “Peoria Bumner,” 22.
57. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 13.
58. Gatto, *The Real Earp*, 16.
59. *Wichita Weekly Beacon*, May 12, 1875; *Wichita City Eagle*, May 6, 1875.
60. Glenn G. Boyer, “Morgan Earp—Brother in the Shadow” *Old West* 20, no. 2 (Winter 1983): 16, quoting Louisa Houston to sister Agnes. Louisa Houston was the daughter of Samuel Houston and Elizabeth Waughtal and was born January 24, 1855, in Wisconsin. Agnes was one of her younger sisters, born September 22, 1857.
61. *Ibid.*, 17, quoting Louisa Houston to sister Kate. Her sister Catherine “Kate” was born May 23, 1856.
62. *Albuquerque Evening Review*, June 21, 1882.
63. *Dodge City Times*, July 21, 1877.
64. Johnson, *Hoo Doo War*, 224–25; *Dodge City Times*, July 27, 1878; *Ford County Globe*, July 30, 1878, and August 27, 1878.
65. *Ford County Globe*, September 9, 1879. These high jinks have been misinterpreted as mass violence by several Earp biographers. See Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 30; Steven Lubet, *Murder in Tombstone* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2004), 9.
66. Bartholomew, *Earp Myth*, 14.
67. Earp writers frequently maintain that Wyatt was not affiliated with Hoodoo Brown or the crime wave that swept Las Vegas during his time there or simply ignore the period. The *Las Vegas Optic* remembered Wyatt as “a former Las Vegas slumgullion.” See *Las Vegas Optic*, December 30, 1881.
68. *San Francisco Examiner*, August 2, 1896.
69. Roberts, *Holliday*, 48–50.
70. *Ibid.*, 45–47.
71. *Ibid.*, 64–67; Roy B. Young review of *Doc Holliday, The Life and Legend*, *WOLA Journal* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 43.
72. *Dallas Daily Herald*, December 27, 1874; Rick Miller, *Bounty Hunter*, (College Station, Texas: Creative Publishing Company, 1988), 47–48; Roberts, *Holliday*, 73. Roberts cites the *Dallas Weekly Herald* of January 2, 1875, and incorrectly places the shooting on December 31, 1874. It appears that Holliday initiated the assault for now forgotten reasons. It was a trademark of Holliday’s career.
73. Roberts, *Holliday*, 79.
74. The woman known variously as Kate Fisher and Kate Elder was born Mary Katharine Harony in Pest, Hungary, on November 7, 1850. The family immigrated to Iowa where her parents had died by 1866. By 1870 she had taken up a life of prostitution.
75. Roberts, *Holliday*, 109–12; Bartholomew, *Earp Myth*, 10; *Las Vegas Daily Gazette*, July 26, 1879; *Santa Fe New Mexican*, August 2, 1879; *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, May 18, 1882.

CHAPTER 16

1. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 33.
2. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, July 30, 1880.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Alford E. Turner, *The O. K. Corral Inquest* (College Station, Texas: Creative Publishing Company, 1981), 156. Statement of Wyatt S. Earp. Hereafter cited as Turner, *Inquest*.
5. Lubet, 137.
6. Bob Alexander, *John H. Behan: Sacrificed Sheriff* (Silver City, New Mexico: High-Lonesome Books, 2002), 146. Hereafter cited as Alexander, *Behan*.
7. *Tombstone Weekly Nugget*, August 5, 1880.

8. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 44.
9. David Pickering and Judy Falls, *Brush Men and Vigilantes: Civil War Dissent in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 46. The authors cite one such example in their book. Another occurred during the Hoo Doo War when A. G. Roberts and others openly chided David Doole as a liar. See Johnson, *Hoo Doo War*, 40–48, 242–49.
10. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 35.
11. Peter Brand, “Sherman W. McMaster(s), The El Paso Salt War, Texas Rangers and Tombstone,” *WOLA Journal* 6, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 2. Hereafter cited as Brand, “McMaster.”
12. Texas Ranger Muster Rolls, TSA; Brand, “McMaster,” 5.
13. Bob Alexander, *Sheriff Harvey Whitehill: Silver City Stalwart* (Silver City, New Mexico: High-Lonesome Books, 2005), 155. Alexander cites *Frontier Times*, October 1936, quoting a May 1883 edition of the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 11. Hereafter cited as Alexander, *Whitehill*.
14. Texas Ranger Muster Rolls, TSA; Brand, “McMaster,” 6.
15. Bob Alexander, *Dangerous Dan Tucker: New Mexico’s Deadly Lawman* (Silver City, New Mexico: High-Lonesome Books, 2001), 35–46.
16. Alexander, *Whitehill*, 156.
17. Philip J. Rasch, *Desperadoes of Arizona Territory* (Stillwater, Oklahoma: National Association for Outlaw and Lawman History, 1999), 34.
18. *Ibid.*, Las Cruces *Rio Grande Republican*, June 30, 1883.
19. *Ibid.*, *Arizona Star Belt*, August 19, 1884.
20. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, July 29, 1880.
21. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 37; Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 66.
22. Roger Jay, “The Gambler’s War in Tombstone: Fact or Fiction?” *WOLA Journal* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 20–21.
23. *San Diego Daily Union*, August 10, 1880; Clara Spalding Brown, *Tombstone from a Woman’s Point of View: The Correspondence of Clara Spalding Brown July 7, 1880, to November 14, 1882*, comp. and ed. Lynn R. Bailey (Tucson, Arizona: Westernlore Press, 1998), 22; Gatto, *Real Earp*, 37; Hancock file.
24. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, October 12, 1880; *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, October 12, 1880.
25. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 44.
26. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, October 29, 1880.
27. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, October 28, 1880.
28. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, October 29, 1880; Dave Johnson, “Death in Tombstone: The White Killing,” *NOLA Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (October–December, 1992): 23–24; Gatto, *Real Earp*, 47–48; Roberts, 130; Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 50.
29. *Arizona Daily Citizen*, December 27, 1880; *Arizona Daily Star*, December 28, 1880; Gatto, *Real Earp*, 51–56.
30. Alexander, *Behan*, 68; *Arizona Daily Star*, November 13, 1880.
31. Alexander, *Behan*, 26–30.
32. *Ibid.*, 62, quoting Stuart N. Lake to Rick Kent of Houghton Mifflin Company, February 13, 1930.
33. Grace McCool, *So Said the Coroner* (Tombstone, Arizona: The *Tombstone Epitaph*, 1968), 87.
34. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 19.
35. Philip J. Rasch, “Adios Dick Lloyd!” *NOLA Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (1983): 7.
36. Burns, 55–58.
37. Lily Klasner, *My Girlhood Among Outlaws*, ed. Eve Ball (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1972), 60.
38. Frederick Nolan, *The Lincoln County War: A Documentary History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 219–20.
39. *Ibid.*, 279; *Santa Fe New Mexican*, May 11, 1878; *Mesilla Independent*, May 28, 1878.
40. Melvin W. Jones file, Arizona Pioneers’ Historical Society, Tucson, Arizona. James C. Hancock disputed this identification and he appears to have been correct. See Steve Gatto, *Curly Bill* (Lansing, Michigan: Protar House, 2003); and Steve Gatto, *Alias Curly Bill: The Life and Times of William Brocius* (Lansing, Michigan: Privately Published, 2000).
41. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, October 28, 1880.
42. Breakenridge, 191.
43. *Ibid.*, 192–94.
44. Jones file.
45. *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, March 13, 1881.
46. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, March 10, 1881.
47. Bartholomew, *Earp Myth*, 270.
48. *Albuquerque Evening Review*, New Albuquerque, New Mexico.

CHAPTER 17

1. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, March 16, 1881.
2. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 67.

3. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 134–35, entry for March 16, 1881.
4. Ibid., 135; Parsons Journal, 134, entry for March 20, 1881.
5. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 77.
6. Roberts, *Holliday*, 144.
7. Fred J. Dodge to Stuart N. Lake, September 18, 1930, in Fred Dodge, *Under Cover for Wells Fargo: The Unvarnished Recollections of Fred Dodge*, ed. Carolyn Lake (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 246. Hereafter cited as Dodge. Fred J. Dodge was born August 29, 1854, at Spring Valley, California. Dodge assisted Stuart N. Lake, who first contacted him in September 1928, in preparing Lake's book on Wyatt Earp. Dodge was initially cautious of Lake, writing in part on September 18 that he would be happy to help him, "But first I must know that it is for Wyatt, and that it will benefit him from a pecuniary standpoint. Have him write me or give me his ad[d]ress and I will write him." Lake complied. Curiously enough Dodge appears to have contacted Earp some days *before* Lake initiated his contact with Dodge. He died on December 16, 1938, at Boerne, Texas.
8. Dodge, 24. Dodge claimed he was an undercover Wells Fargo agent during the Earp years in Tombstone. That cannot be verified due to the destruction of the early Wells Fargo records. Earp stated in 1885 that the special agent was John N. Thacker. See Chalmers to Garland, August 13, 1885, and September 3, 1885, RG60. Dodge did work for Wells Fargo at a much later date.
9. Bartholomew, *Earp Myth*, 131, quoting Sarah Bakarich, *Gunsmoke*.
10. Pat Jahns, *The Frontier World of Doc Holliday* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 171.
11. Jacob R. Marcus, ed., "An Arizona Pioneer: Memoirs of Sam Aaron," *American Jewish Archives* 10, no. 1 (October 1958): 103.
12. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, July 20, 1881.
13. Gray manuscript, 54.
14. *Arizona Sentinel*, February 26, 1881.
15. Peter Brand, "Sherman W. McMaster(s): The El Paso Salt War, Texas Rangers & Tombstone," *WOLA Journal* 6, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 8.
16. Ibid.
17. *Arizona Daily Star*, February 9, 1882; Joe Chisholm, *Brewery Gulch* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1949), 98.
18. Lynn R. Bailey and Don Chaput, *Cochise County Stalwarts*, Volume 2 (Tucson, Arizona: Westernlore Press, 2000), 190.
19. Tefertiller, 77. Earp here states that Behan let King talk to Len Redfield. Paula Mitchell Marks and Lake indicate that Earp was incensed that Behan allowed Redfield to engage King in secret conversation.
20. Wyatt S. Earp, *Wyatt Earp* (Sierra Vista, Arizona: Yuma Bissette, 1981), 202.
21. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 209.
22. *Nugget*, March 29, 1881.
23. *Tucson Weekly Citizen*, April 5, 1881.
24. Harry Martyn Woods was born in Alabama around 1849. By 1878 he was in Arizona where he worked for the *Tucson Record* prior to helping Artemus Fay produce the *Nugget* that he later acquired. Woods served in the Territorial House of Representatives. He remained a journalist for all of his life. Following a paralytic stroke, he died in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in early 1896.
25. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, April 1, 1881.
26. Turner, *Inquest*, 105–6, 156–59.
27. The evidence strongly suggests Crane was honest with Gray. Further investigation into this matter is necessary.
28. *Daily Pueblo Colorado Chieftain*, February 17, 1881. The report was derived from the *Tucson Weekly Citizen* of February 13, 1881. How the Tucson paper determined that the men were mainly Texans is, justifiably, open to speculation.
29. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, March 18, 1881.
30. John Phillip Clum was born to William H. and Elizabeth Van Deusen Clum September 1, 1851, at Claverack, New York. In 1871 he joined the Signal Corps of the U. S. Army and was ordered to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he operated a meteorological observation station. In 1874 he was appointed agent of the San Carlos Indian Reservation. He married Mary Ware on November 8, 1876.
31. Robert Todd Lincoln to Wayne MacVeagh, April 12, 1881, RG60.
32. Wayne MacVeagh to E. B. Pomroy, April 14, 1881, RG60.
33. E. B. Pomroy to Mulliken, April 21, 1881, RG60.
34. Lynn R. Bailey and Don Chaput, *Cochise County Stalwarts*, Volume 2 (Tucson, Arizona: Westernlore Press, 2000), 84.
35. Ibid., 17.
36. *Austin Daily Statesman*, May 3, 1881.
37. Record of Arrests, Austin History Center, Austin, Texas.
38. *The Pioneer*, April 23, 1881.
39. *Nugget*, June 9, 1881.
40. Bowyer to Gosper, September 17, 1881, RG60.

41. Joe Evans to C. P. Dake, June 30, 1881, RG60. Joe Evans was stationed in Tucson. Available information indicates that this relatively unknown lawman pursued outlaws such as Brigido Reyes on both sides of the border. Governor Luis Torres knew and respected Evans.

42. Orlando B. Willcox to Adjutant General, Military Division of the Pacific, June 9, 1881, RG60.

43. Chuck Parsons, “*Pidge*,” *A Texas Ranger From Virginia* (Wolfe City, Texas: Henington Publishing, 1985), 87–91, 135–36; Parsons and Hall, 227–46. McNelly’s “invasion” of Mexico was lauded by the Texas press. The *Galveston Daily News* of December 12, 1875, reported in part: “The policy of retaliation, swift and vigorous, is the only one that promises relief to the citizens of a long suffering frontier—the only one which will purchase immunity from further outrages. Through a long series of years the citizens of the border have suffered from predatory bands, until forbearance has ceased to be a virtue. . . . This can be done only by following the bands to their strongholds, wherever they may be, and teaching them that American citizens are not to be robbed and murdered with impunity by thieving cut-throats, who believe (and with good reason) that the Rio Grande is a rubicon beyond whose waters none dare pass; that once on the Mexican bank, they are safe from pursuit, and even from inquiry.”

CHAPTER 18

1. *Weekly Arizona Star*, June 16, 1881.

2. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, June 21, 1881.

3. J. W. Evans to C. P. Dake, June 18, 1881, RG60.

4. Luis Torres to J. W. Evans, June 24, 1881, RG60.

5. *Star*, June 23, 1881.

6. Orlando B. Willcox to the Adjutant General, Military Division of the Pacific, June 28, 1881, RG60.

7. Alexander, *Whitehill*, 123–25; Alexander, *Tucker*, 73–74.

8. Turner, *Inquest*, 157.

9. *Ibid.*, 105.

10. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, June 9, 1881.

11. *Arizona Weekly Star*, June 23, 1881; Roy B. Young, “the Other Ike & Billy: the Heslet Brothers in Grant County, New Mexico.” *WOLA Journal* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2006), 28–29.

12. *Arizona Daily Star*, June 23, 1881; Young, 29–30, quotes the *Ogden Standard Examiner* of June 22, 1881, as stating “There is no trace who they were.”

13. Traywick, *Ringo*, 9; DeMattos, “Johnny Ringo,” 41; Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 145.

14. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, July 12, 1881.

15. E. B. Pomroy to Wayne MacVeagh, June 23, 1881, RG 60.

16. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 182.

17. C. P. Dake to Wayne MacVeagh, May 30, 1881, RG60.

18. Leigh Chalmers to A. H. Garland, United States Attorney General, September 3, 1885, RG60.

19. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, July 6, 1881; Gatto, *Real Earp*, 71; Alexander, *Behan*, 89–90; Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 86; Roberts, *Holliday*, 154.

20. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, July 7, 1881; Gatto, *Real Earp*, 71; Alexander, *Behan*, 89–90; Tefertiller, 86; Roberts, *Holliday*, 154.

21. Roberts, *Holliday*, 154.

22. Roberts, *Holliday*, 155, quoting Joe Chisholm, “Tombstone’s Tale: The Truth of Helldorado,” an unpublished and undated manuscript.

23. Hancock File.

24. Gray manuscript, 139–40.

25. Burns, 88–90.

26. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, August 3, 1881.

27. *Ibid.* The Epitaph reported substantially the same story under the headline “An Interrupted Breakfast” on August 5, 1881, two days after the *Nugget*’s story.

28. J. W. Evans to C. P. Dake, August 4, 1881, RG60.

29. C. P. Dake to Wayne MacVeagh, August 5, 1881, RG60.

30. J. W. Evans to C. P. Dake, August 10, 1881, RG60.

31. Hancock File.

32. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, August 13, 1881.

33. *Ibid.*, August 14, 1881.

34. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, August 11, 1881.

35. Breakenridge, 231.

CHAPTER 19

1. Gatto, *Ringo*, 88.
2. Cochise County, Arizona, District Court Records, copy courtesy Steve Gatto.
3. Michael M. Hickey, *John Ringo: The Final Hours, A Tale of the Old West* (Honolulu, Hawaii: Talei Publishers, 1995), 5.
4. *Arizona Daily Star*, September 4, 1881.
5. Chaput, 103; Traywick, *Ringo*, 11.
6. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 97.
7. Gray manuscript, 36; John Pleasant Gray, *Tombstone's Violent Years, 1880–1882 As Remembered by John Pleasant Gray*, ed. Neil B. Carmony (Tucson, Arizona: Trail to Yesterday Books, 1999), 21–22.
8. Gray manuscript, 36.
9. Ibid. This is not the only link the Earp brothers had with accused stage robbers. In July of 1881 the stage running from Arizona Territory to Hermosilla, Mexico, was held up. Virgil Earp dispatched Dan Tipton and Sherm McMaster to trail the robbers. McMaster was then wanted for the Globe stage robbery along with Pony Diehl and for the federal crime of stealing mules from Camp Rucker.
10. Dodge, 246.
11. Gray manuscript, 36.
12. Dixie Lee Gray was the son of Michael Gray and Sarah Ann Robinson and was born at Guaymas, Mexico, in 1862. The Grays came to Tombstone in June of 1879. Dixie was a notary public and conveyancer in Tombstone. Bailey, *Tombstone Stalwarts*, 1, 154–55.
13. *Arizona Daily Star*, September 1, 1881.
14. *Arizona Daily Citizen*, August 21, 1881.
15. *Arizona Daily Star*, August 25, 1881.
16. *The New Southwest and Grant County Herald*, August 20, 1881.
17. Kelton to Adjutant General, August 22, 1881, RG60.
18. Parsons journal, 170; Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 166–67, entry for August 17, 1881.
19. Brown, *Tombstone*, 39–40. Clara S. Brown was a daughter of Stillman Spalding and Ann Holden and was born in New Hampshire in 1855. During the mid-1870s she married Theodore M. Brown and the couple migrated to San Diego, California, in 1878. The couple returned to California in 1882. She died July 25, 1935, in Los Angeles.
20. Bailey, *Tombstone Stalwarts*, 64.
21. Dan L. Thrapp, *The Conquest of Apacheria* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 223; Bailey, *The Valiants*, 22.
22. Bailey, *The Valiants*, 22.
23. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 171, entry for September 5, 1881.
24. *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, September 18, 1881.
25. Bailey, *The Valiants*, 26.
26. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, September 10, 1881. The *Nugget* was probably referring to John Behan's crossing the Mexican border in July of 1881 when he made an "illegal arrest." Alexander, *Behan*, 96; Larry D. Ball, *The United States Marshals of New Mexico and Arizona Territories, 1846–1912* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), 118.
27. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, September 13, 1881.
28. Roy B. Young, *Cochise County Cowboy War: A Cast of Characters* (Apache, Oklahoma: Young & Sons Enterprises, 1999), 120.
29. *Weekly Arizona Miner*, October 19, 1877.
30. Young, *Cochise County Cowboy War*, 120.
31. Roy B. Young, *Pete Spence, "Audacious Artist in Crime"* (Apache, Oklahoma: Young & Sons Enterprises, 2000), 7.
32. 1860 Live Oak County, Texas, Census.
33. Texas Ranger Muster Rolls, AGR, TSA.
34. William Steele to Warren Wallace, August 10, 1874. AGR, TSA.
35. Fugitives from Justice; J. Lee Hall to William Steele, November 4, 1876.
36. Young, *Pete Spence*, 16–17.
37. Gatto, *Ringo*, 90.
38. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, September 10, 1881.
39. Ibid.
40. Brand, "McMaster," 10.
41. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, September 10, 1881.
42. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, September 10, 1881; *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, September 10, 1881; Brand, "McMaster," 10–11; Paul Cool, "Escape of the Highwayman: The Riddle of Sherman McMaster," *WOLA Journal* 9, no. 2 (Summer 2000): passim.
43. Joseph Bowyer to John J. Gosper, September 17, 1881, RG60.
44. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 180, entry for October 6, 1881.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid. Zwing Hunt was the son of Thomas W. and Mary Ann Johnson Hunt and was born around 1858 in Texas. The 1860 Census for Burnet County lists the older Hunt as a stock raiser, born in Georgia with three children, the youngest being two-year-old Zwingle. On March 29, 1879, Joel Hunt, his older brother, was killed by Indians near Hillsborough, New Mexico, while driving a freight wagon. Zwing petitioned to take over the business and moved to New Mexico from Bosque County. Where he met Grounds is uncertain.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., 182–84, entries for October 6 and 7, 1881.

CHAPTER 20

1. A. M. Franklin, “Story of Ringo and the Cattle Thieves,” unpublished manuscript: Arizona State Archives. Franklin narrated the story in 1925 to a Mr. Widdowsen.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. C. P. Dake to Wayne MacVeagh, September 14, 1881, RG60.

5. John J. Gosper to James G. Blaine, September 30, 1881, RG60.

6. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, October 2, 1881.

7. Diaz-Gonzalez, 8–9.

8. *Arizona Weekly Star*, October 13, 1881; *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, October 9, 1881.

9. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 107.

10. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, October 14, 1881.

11. Gatto, *Ringo*, 95–96.

12. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, October 14, 1881.

13. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, November 17, 1881; Turner, *Inquest*, 158–59.

14. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, October 15, 1881.

15. Paul Cool, “Billy Breakenridge: Buying Scalps from Sand Creek,” *WOLA Journal* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 51.

16. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 182; Parsons Journal, 184, entry for October 6, 1881.

17. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, September 24, 1881.

18. Dodge, 246.

19. Paula Mitchell Marks, *And Die in the West* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1989), 195.

20. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, October 25, 1881.

21. Turner, *Inquest*, 99. The two major documents relating to the O. K. Corral gunfight are the coroner’s inquest, Document 48, and the Spicer hearing, Document 94 which now exist only in the manuscript of Hal L. Hayhurst. To simplify access for the reader interested in learning more about this fight, the footnotes and text have generally been drawn from Turner. A word of caution is necessary. Turner remarks that Hayhurst “also was thoroughly anti-Earp in his viewpoint and footnoted his work accordingly. . . . Hayhurst’s prejudiced footnotes have been deleted and replaced.” Turner, 16. He might have added, “with prejudiced footnotes of my own.” A remark concerning the testimony of J. H. Allman and Andrew Mehan that Tom McLaury and Ike Clanton had checked their weapons is typical. “Allman and Mehan’s testimony regarding the checking of Ike Clanton and Tom McLaury’s weapons appears to be real enough on the surface, but the weapons in question could easily be a plant by the prosecution to help convict the Earps,” Turner, 89. There is no evidence of this innuendo having any truthfulness. Readers should disregard all footnotes, both Hayhurst’s and Turner’s.

22. Ibid., Testimony of Joseph I. Clanton, 97.

23. Ibid., Statement of Wyatt S. Earp, 159–60. Wells Spicer permitted Earp to read his rambling and often unsupported statement in court. Cross-examination was not permitted.

24. Ibid., Testimony of Virgil Earp, 196.

25. Ibid., Testimony of E. F. Boyle, 174.

26. Ibid., Testimony of Julius Kelley, 203.

27. Ibid., Testimony of R. F. Hafford, 62.

28. Ibid., Testimony of Joseph I. Clanton, 98–99.

29. Ibid., Testimony of Wyatt S. Earp, 161.

30. Ibid., Testimony of James Kehoe, 69.

31. Ibid., Testimony of A. Bauer, 122.

32. Ibid., Testimony of J. H. Batcher, 126.

33. Ibid., Testimony of Thomas Keefe, 127.

34. Ibid., Testimony of William Allen, 55. Roberts attempts to dismiss the gesture toward an enemy as “likely nothing more than common Southern courtesy,” Roberts, 190.

35. Turner, 61.
36. Steven Lubet, *Murder in Tombstone* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2004), 222. The officers were James Flynn, A. G. Bronk, and Dave Campbell.
37. Turner, Testimony of Virgil Earp, 196.
38. Lubet, 222.
39. Ibid., Testimony of Virgil Earp, 193.
40. Ibid., Testimony of Martha J. King, 40.
41. Ibid., Testimony of H. M. Matthews, 134.
42. Ibid., Testimony of James Kehoe, 69.
43. Ibid., Testimony of Thomas Keefe, 130.
44. Ibid., Testimony of Andrew Mehan, 75; Testimony of J. H. Allman, 88.
45. Ibid., Testimony of E. F. Boyle, 174–175.
46. Lubet, 155.
47. Lynn R. Bailey, *Henry Clay Hooker and the Sierra Bonita* (Tucson, Arizona: Westernlore Press, 1998), 173.

CHAPTER 21

1. Lubet, 155.
2. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, October 28, 1881.
3. Turner, 22.
4. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, October 30, 1881.
5. Ibid., November 26, 1881.
6. Ibid., November 29, 1881.
7. Ibid., November 30, 1881.
8. Ibid., December 1, 1881.
9. Lubet, 141.
10. Turner, 51.
11. Lubet, 175.
12. Turner, *Inquest*, 188.
13. Ibid., Testimony of H. F. Sills, 181.
14. Phillip J. Rasch, “‘Six Shooter’ and ‘Three Shooter’ Smith,” *NOLA Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (Winter 1985): 9.
15. Turner, *Inquest*, Testimony of H. F. Sills, 187.
16. Ibid., 188.
17. Ibid., 182.
18. Alexander, *Behan*, 167. Alexander provides an exceptionally useful and evenhanded account of the events of the gunfight.
19. Lubet, 223.
20. Turner, *Inquest*, 173.
21. Ibid., Testimony of Joseph I. Clanton, 116–17.
22. Bartholomew, *Earp Myth*, 258 quoting William R. McLaury to D. D. Applegate November 1881; William R. McLaury to D. D. Applegate, November 8, 1881. Copy in author’s collection. Applegate was married to Margaret McLaury.
23. Ball, 121, quoting the *Prescott Daily Miner* of November 10 and 24, 1881.
24. Turner, Wells Spicer Decision, 219–20.
25. Lubet, 222.
26. Cochise County District Court Records, Cause 53.
27. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 1, 1881.
28. Cochise County Criminal Register of Actions, Cause 53.
29. Bailey, *Stalwarts*, 1, 65.
30. Cochise County Criminal Register of Actions, Cause 53; Cochise County District Court Records, Cause 53.
31. Cochise County Criminal Register of Actions, Causes 72 and 86.
32. Cochise County District Court Records, Cause 81.
33. While he is referred to as Evilsinger in the *Tombstone Epitaph*, historian Roy B. Young was able to determine that his correct name was Lawson Evilsizer, born around 1856 in Lincoln County, Missouri. He is listed in the Colusa County, California, 1880 census and the 1910 Gunnison, Colorado, Census.
34. John J. Gosper to President Chester A. Arthur, December 12, 1881, RG 60.
35. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 136.
36. Traywick, *Ringo*, 13.
37. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 15, 1881.
38. Ibid., December 16, 1881.

39. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 164, quoting John Clum.
40. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, December 15, 1881.
41. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 16, 1881.
42. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 196; Parsons Journal, 200, entry for December 17, 1881.
43. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 18, 1881.
44. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, December 16, 1881.
45. C. P. Dake to Samuel F. Phillips, December 8, 1881. RG 60.
46. J. J. Gosper to Phillips, acting attorney general, December 8, 1881, RG 60.
47. Alexander, *Behan*, 180.
48. *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, November 13, 1881; Alexander, *Tucker*, 84–86.
49. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, December 7, 1881; *Arizona Weekly Star*, December 15, 1881.
50. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, December 16, 1881.

CHAPTER 22

1. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, December 29, 1881.
2. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 199, entry for December 29, 1881.
3. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 175.
4. Steve Gatto, *Curly Bill* (Lansing, Michigan: Protar House, 2003), 93.
5. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, February 3, 1882; Gatto, *Real Earp*, 167.
6. DeMattos, “Johnny Ringo,” 41.
7. Traywick, *Ringo*, 13.
8. *Phoenix Herald*, December 30, 1881; *Weekly Arizona Miner*, December 30, 1881; Gatto, *Real Earp*, 142; Roberts, 233; Tefertiller, *Earp Story*, 175.
9. *Phoenix Arizona Gazette*, December 30, 1881.
10. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 142.
11. Peter Brand, “Wyatt Earp, Jack Johnson, and the Notorious Blount Brothers,” *NOLA Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (October–December 2003): 36. Hereafter cited as Brand, “Blount.”
12. Philip J. Rasch, *Desperadoes of Arizona Territory* (Stillwater, Oklahoma: National Association for Outlaw and Lawman History, 1999), 168. Hereafter cited as Rasch, *Desperadoes*.
13. *Silver City Enterprise*, April 8, 1883.
14. Rasch, *Desperadoes*, 169.
15. 1881 Great Register, Cochise County, Arizona; Peter Brand, “Daniel G. Tipton and the Earp Vendetta Posse,” *NOLA Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (October–December 2000): 17.
16. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 55.
17. Bailey, *Hooker*, 173; Lubet, 155.
18. Brand, “Blount,” 37–38.
19. *Ibid.*, 39.
20. *Ibid.*, 41–42. Significantly Willard did not give his testimony until the early 1890s, a clear indication of the intimidation the Blount gang was capable of.
21. Tefertiller, 182.
22. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 199; Parsons Journal, 203, entry for December 28, 1881.
23. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 142.
24. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, January 1, 1882. The “Daily Strangler” had become the *Nugget*’s name for the *Epitaph* due to Clum’s advocacy of vigilante justice.
25. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 144.
26. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 200.
27. Alexander, *Behan*, 181; Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 198.
28. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 143.
29. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 183.
30. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, January 8, 1881; *Tombstone Weekly Epitaph*, January 9, 1881.
31. *Ibid.*
32. DeMattos, “Johnny Ringo,” 41.
33. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, January 8, 1881; *Tombstone Weekly Epitaph*, January 9, 1881.
34. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 181.
35. *Ibid.*, 361.
36. Cochise County District Court Records, Causes 53 and 81.
37. Tefertiller, *Earp Story*, 181.
38. *Tombstone Weekly Epitaph*, January 9, 1881.

39. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, July 14, 1881.
40. Parsons Journal, 206; Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 201–2, entry for January 17, 1882.
41. *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, January 22, 1882. The *Citizen*'s account was based on an earlier *Tombstone Nugget* article.
42. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, January 18, 1882.
43. Hancock File.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Undated personal interview with Ben Olney in author's collection.
46. Frank King, *Wranglin' with the Past* (Pasadena, California: Privately published, 1935), 207–8. King is quoting Robert Boller.
47. Cochise County District Court Records, Cause 53.
48. *Ibid.*, Cause 81.
49. Breakenridge, 233.
50. *Ibid.*
51. Affidavit of James C. Earp, Arizona Pioneer's Historical Society, Tucson, Arizona.
52. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 202–3; Parsons Journal, 208, entry for January 25, 1882.
53. *Arizona Gazette*, January 25, 1882, reprinted in the *Tombstone Epitaph*, January 28, 1882; Report by Leigh Chalmers, Examiner for the Department of Justice, 1885, Record Group 60; Gatto, *Real Earp*, 147.
54. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, January 24, 1882.
55. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 202; Parsons Journal, 208, entry for January 21, 1882.

CHAPTER 23

1. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, January 24, 1882.
2. *Ibid.*, January 25, 1882.
3. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, January 26, 1882.
4. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, January 27, 1882.
5. Benjamin Franklin Maynard was born in Tennessee in 1847. He was a partner with William Millikin in a Tombstone saloon.
6. Parsons Journal, 206; Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 201, entry for January 17, 1882.
7. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 189.
8. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, January 27, 1882.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, February 1, 1882.
12. *Albuquerque Morning Journal*, January 31, 1882.
13. *Las Vegas Optic*, January 31, 1882.
14. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 188.
15. Brown, *Tombstone from a Woman's Point of View*, 51.
16. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 204, entry for January 30, 1882.
17. *Ibid.*, 82–83, entry for September 1, 1880.
18. Cochise County District Court Minutes, Cause 81.
19. Cochise County Criminal Register of Actions, Cause 81.
20. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 167.
21. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 187–88.
22. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, February 2, 1882.
23. Tefertiller, *Earp Story*, 190.
24. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 160.
25. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 197.
26. *Arizona Daily Star*, February 9, 1882.
27. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 198. Curiously the author appears to have missed the statement in the same letter that Holliday was one of the stage robbers.
28. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, February 3, 1882.
29. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 167.
30. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, February 3, 1882.
31. *Ibid.* Curiously Earp apologists seem to have missed this article in the *Epitaph* and accept the "Clanton hat" fiction.
32. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, February 11, 1882.
33. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 163.
34. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 206; Parsons Journal, 213, entry for February 15, 1882.
35. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, February 18, 1882.
36. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 163.

37. El Paso *Lone Star*, February 18, 1882.
38. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 164.
39. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, January 27, 1882.
40. Ball, *Marshals*, 130.
41. Gatto, *Real Earp*, 164.
42. Gatto, *Ringo*, 129.
43. Cochise County District Court Records, Cause 81.

CHAPTER 24

1. Brown, 52–52, letter dated March 10, 1882.
2. Ball, 130–32; Gatto, *Real Earp*, 165; Report by Leigh Chalmers, Examiner, Department of Justice, 1885.
3. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, March 23, 1882.
4. Gatto, *Ringo*, 130.
5. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, March 20, 1882.
6. McCool, 84.
7. Endicott Peabody, *A Church For Helldorado*, ed. S. J. Reidhead (Roswell, New Mexico: Jinglebob Press, 2006), 58, 59.
8. Peabody, entry for March 20, 1882, 60.
9. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, March 22 and 23, 1882.
10. Traywick, *Ringo*, 15.
11. Wyatt Earp to Walter Noble Burns, March 15, 1927. Walter Noble Burns Collection, University of Arizona Library, Special Collections, Tucson, Arizona.
12. Bailey, *Hooker*, 173.
13. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 233.
14. *Ibid.*, 227.
15. *The Examiner* (San Francisco), August 2, 1896.
16. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, March 22, 1882.
17. *Arizona Daily Star*, March 22, 1882.
18. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, March 22, 1882.
19. George Hand, *Whiskey, Six-Guns and Red-Light Ladies: George Hand's Saloon Diary, Tucson, 1875–1878*, ed. Neil B. Carmony (Tucson, Arizona: Trail to Yesterday Books, 1994), 228.
20. *Arizona Daily Citizen*, March 21, 1882.
21. *Arizona Daily Star*, March 25, 1882. As recently as July 17, 2006, one of Wyatt Earp's strongest and most sympathetic biographers, Casey Tefertiller, acknowledged that Wyatt Earp had murdered Frank Stilwell at the WOLA conference in Sierra Vista, Arizona. Interview with Bob Alexander, August 6, 2006, and Roy B. Young, July 29, 2006.
22. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 227.
23. Peabody, entry for March 23, 1882, 63.
24. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, June 3, 1882.
25. *Arizona Daily Star*, March 22, 1882.
26. Personal interview with Gordon Cooper, June 2006.
27. *Arizona Daily Star*, March 22, 1882.
28. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 213; Parsons Journal, 221, entry for March 21, 1882.
29. *Arizona Daily Star*, March 25, 1882.
30. Behan's attempt to arrest the Earps has provoked controversy among Earp enthusiasts. The most even-handed account of the arrest attempt is made in Alexander, *Behan*, 189–91.
31. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 213, entry for March 22, 1882.
32. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 233.
33. Roberts, 251.
34. Expense vouchers of John H. Behan, April 4, 1882, courtesy Arizona Historical Society, Tombstone, Arizona. The document is found in Cochise County Records, MS 180, box 8, folder 83.
35. 1880 Pima County, Arizona, Census; Roy B. Young, *Cochise County Cowboy War: A Cast of Characters* (Apache, Oklahoma: Young & Sons Enterprises, 1999), 29.
36. 1880 Pima County, Arizona, Census.
37. Young, *Cochise County Cowboy War*, 87.
38. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, March 22, 1882.
39. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 233–35; McCool, 86.
40. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, March 23, 1882.
41. *Ibid.*, January 8, 1882.
42. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, March 23, 1882.

43. Bob Boze Bell, "The Case Against Wyatt Earp," *True West*, February 1999, 21.
44. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, March 27, 1882.
45. Steve Gatto, *Curly Bill* (Lansing, Michigan: Protar House, 2003), 110.
46. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, April 3, 1882.
47. Breakenridge, 175.
48. *El Paso Daily Times*, June 26, 1883.
49. *Tombstone Daily Nugget*, April 3, 1882.
50. Hancock File.
51. *Rocky Mountain News*, May 21, 1882.
52. John Richard Stephens, ed., *Wyatt Earp Speaks* (Cambria, California: Fern Canyon Press, 1998) quoting the *Arizona Star*, March 1882, 12.

CHAPTER 25

1. Bailey, *Valiants*, 33.
2. *New Southwest and Grant County Herald*, April 22, 1882.
3. Ball, 127.
4. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, March 27, 1882.
5. Bailey, *Tenderfoot*, 214.
6. *Tombstone Weekly Epitaph*, August 19, 1882.
7. Ibid.
8. *Denver Tribune*, May 16, 1882.
9. *Tombstone Weekly Epitaph*, August, 19, 1882; *Burnet Bulletin*, July 6, 1882; *San Antonio Daily Express*, June 21, 1882.
10. Roberts, 372.
11. Peter Brand, "Daniel G. Tipton and the Earp Vendetta Posse," *NOLA Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (October–December 2000): 25.
12. Rasch, *Desperadoes of Arizona Territory*, 168–69.
13. Ibid., 169–70.
14. 1898 Great Register of Cochise County.
15. *Arizona Range News*, July 11, 1900.
16. Brand, "Blount," 45.
17. Tefertiller, *Earp Legend*, 306–7.
18. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, April 15, 1882.
19. Ibid., April 30, 1882.
20. Ibid., May 6, 1882.
21. Cochise County District Court Records, Causes 53.
22. Ibid., Causes 53 and 81.
23. Ibid., Cause 81.
24. Cochise County District Court Records, Causes 53 and 81.
25. 1882 Great Register of Cochise County.
26. Emma M. Muir, *Old Shakespeare* (Lordsburg, New Mexico: John T. Muir Ranch, n.d.), 16.
27. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, July 18, 1882; *Tombstone Weekly Epitaph*, July 22, 1882.
28. Breakenridge, 313.
29. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, July 18, 1882; *Tombstone Weekly Epitaph*, July 22, 1882.
30. *New Southwest and Grant County Herald*, July 22, 1882.
31. Translation courtesy Chuck Parsons to the author, March 6, 1999.
32. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 188.
33. Ibid., 141.
34. Ibid., 142–43.
35. Gatto, *Ringo*, 168.
36. *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, July 30, 1882.
37. *Arizona Weekly Star*, July 20, 1882.
38. *Phoenix Gazette*, July 18, 1882. Accounts of Ringo's death appeared in many newspapers including the *Los Angeles Times* of July 18, 1882.
39. Reminiscences of Robert M. Boller, Arizona Historical Society.
40. Ibid.
41. Robert M. Boller to Frank M. King, September 20, 1934. Copy courtesy Steve Gatto.
42. Hancock File.
43. Reminiscences of Robert M. Boller, Arizona Historical Society.

44. *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, July 30, 1882.
45. *Arizona Silver Belt*, December 13, 1884. The *Arizona Weekly Citizen* of December 13, 1884, also published an account of Joe “Hill” Olney’s death.
46. Traywick, *Ringo*, 16.
47. Yuma Penitentiary Prison Records; Yuma (Arizona) *Times*, June 14, 1893.
48. Yuma Penitentiary Prison Records; Pardon of Phineas Clanton, courtesy Arizona Historical Society, Tucson, Arizona.
49. *Arizona Silver Belt*, January 11, 1906.

CHAPTER 26

1. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 141.
2. Traywick, *Ringo*, 5.
3. Gatto, *Ringo*, 228.
4. David Leer Ringo, rev. of Jack Burrows, *John Ringo: The Gunfighter Who Never Was* in *Ringo Researcher* 3, no. 3 (1987): 127.
5. Burrows, “Ringo Myth,” 6.
6. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 147.
7. Burrows, “Ringo Myth,” 6.
8. *Tombstone Daily Epitaph*, July 25, 1882.
9. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 138.
10. *Ibid.*, 139.
11. Minerva Hambling Letton to David L. Ringo, September 15, 1934, courtesy David L. Ringo. Copy in author’s files.
12. Letton Monograph, courtesy David L. Ringo. Copy in author’s files.
13. Minerva Hambling Letton to David L. Ringo, October 12, 1934, courtesy David L. Ringo. Copy in author’s files.
14. Minerva H. Letton to David L. Ringo, October 12, 1934. Courtesy David L. Ringo. Copy in author’s files.
15. Mattie B. Cushing and M. Enna Ringo to David Leer Ringo and Mrs. J. H. Letton, November 5, 1934.
16. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 141, quoting May Ringo King to Joanna (Green).
17. May King to the author, August 27, 1992.
18. Dr. William K. Hall to the author, September 14, 1992.
19. Frank Cushing to Charles R. Ringo, August 12, 1970. Cushing noted that he had “known him [Erwin] for twelve or more years.” Courtesy David L. Ringo. Copy in author’s files.
20. Allen Erwin to Robert N. Mullin, September 16, 1959. Robert N. Mullin Collection, Haley Memorial Library, Midland, Texas.
21. Allen Erwin to Charles Parsons, January 19, 1973, courtesy Chuck Parsons. Copy in author’s files.
22. Frank Cushing to Charles Ringo, August 12, 1970, courtesy David L. Ringo. Copy in author’s files.
23. Burrows, *Gunfighter*, 214.
24. Frank Cushing to Charles Ringo, August 12, 1970.
25. Era Fay Huff to the author, February 17, 1983.
26. Allen Erwin to Charles Parsons, January 19, 1973.
27. Allen Erwin to Charles Parsons, May 9, 1973, courtesy Chuck Parsons. Copy in author’s files.
28. Charles R. Ringo to Frank Cushing, January 8, 1970. Courtesy David L. Ringo. Copy in author’s files.
29. Burrows, “Ringo,” 17.
30. Frank Cushing to May King, March 2, 1971, courtesy May Ringo King. Copy in author’s files.
31. *San Jose Pioneer*, December 13, 1879 and April 23, 1881.
32. George Lyttleton Upshur, *As I Recall Them: Memories of Crowded Years* (New York: Wilson-Erickson, 1936), 155.

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The following represents an abbreviated bibliography of sources used in preparing this biography of John Ringo for publication. While it does not pretend to be an all-inclusive listing of the sources consulted, it should provide interested readers with enough information to pursue their own research.

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These files include monthly reports of Ranger commanders, muster rolls, pay rolls, state police muster rolls and related documents. The originals are located in the Texas State Archives, Lorenzo de Zavala State Archives & Library Building, P.O. Box 12927, Austin, Texas 78711. Donaly E. Brice, research specialist, has been consistently helpful in my research efforts.

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INTERVIEWS, LETTERS, RESEARCH NOTES

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Bob Alexander Archival Collection.

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David Leer Ringo Archival Collection of unpublished Ringo correspondence.

Pete Rose Archival Collection.

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